

The Practice  
—of—  
The Interior Life

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1831-1905.

The practice of the interior  
life









# The Practice

...OF...

# The Interior Life

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BY THE

**Right Reverend William E. McLaren, S.T.D., D.C.L.,  
BISHOP OF CHICAGO.**

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"But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that  
Good Part, which shall not be taken away from her."

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To the Women's Auxiliary  
of the  
Diocese of Chicago,

Who, on a "Quiet Day," First Heard  
a Considerable Portion of it,  
This Volume

Is Affectionately Inscribed by their  
Bishop.



“**M**OW it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His Word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”—*S. Luke, x. 38-42.*



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## CHAPTER I.

### A Quiet Day at Bethany.

THE IMMEASURABLE GREATNESS OF THE SON OF GOD—ITS FOUNDATIONS IN HIS INTERIOR LIFE—HIS JOURNEY TO BETHANY AND RECEPTION THERE—THE REBUKE OF MARTHA AND THE APPROVAL OF MARY.

**D**EAR as Jerusalem was to His heart, our Lord was never a permanent resident of the Holy City. His pious duty as a member of the Old Covenant, however, as well as His ministry in the establishment of the New, rendered frequent journeys thither necessary. He must be about His Father's business. He to whom God the Father gave not the Spirit by measure, whose will was in perfect unison with the Father's, with whom His communion was unspeakably intimate, whose life was so purely interior that external duties could not bring to bear upon Him any force of distraction or abatement or weariness, could never for

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one moment lose sight of that which was given Him to do. But it was the absolute simplicity of His will in its relation to the Father which put vitality into His relation to His mission.

We do an injustice to the symmetry of His character if we dwell too much upon His passive experiences. True, He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, but He was also a being of immeasurable force and aggressive power. The thorns which crowned Him crowned the kingliest of men. The human nature which hung upon the cross was endowed with those exceptional and transcendent qualities, which, in others, are expressed by the term "genius," save that in Him they passed up to the height of unprecedented power. Consider what a mastery and force was His, who, at the end of nineteen centuries, exercises upon mankind a greater influence than He did during the period of His physical stay upon the earth!

But the most cursory view of this wonderful life indicates that the hidden sources of His power were in the Divine. The works of His hands, the immense devotion of His powers to the welfare of men, the zeal which gave Him no rest in the prosecution of His mission but rather consumed Him, grew out of the perfection of His interior relations with the Father. The inexpressible force of His will, bursting into activity at every step of His career and never more vividly than at its close,

## A Quiet Day at Bethany.

proclaimed in actions more eloquent than words, the absolute and intelligent co-operation of His human will with His Divine. The foundation upon which Christianity has been built up through the ages, triumphing over its foes and over its own corruptions, has been the unique spiritual greatness of its Founder. If these triumphs have not been final, if we see not yet all things put under Him, the responsibility lies not at His door. It is the Church which has failed, by her want of devotion to her commission. It is the individual disciple that has failed, by failure to live the life of Christ in the world in measure as he ought. It is he that has failed, who has lost sight of the essential feature of Christ's zeal that it was the expression of a deep interior devotion. Therefore the great present need is the restoration of the idea of the Christian life which the life of Christ teaches and exemplifies. We need to learn from Him the practice of the supernatural virtues, the evangelical counsels, the conquest of self-love, the life of prayer, the pure love of God for His Own sake.

We spoke just now of our Lord's frequent journeys to Jerusalem. It was upon one of these that He stopped in at the home of Martha and Mary at Bethany. He knows well the way through its narrow streets, for very often, and, possibly, as often as He has journeyed up to Jerusalem, has He found temporary respite and rest under Martha's hospitable roof. Few were the homes where He

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was a welcome visitor; and His intimacy with this onestrangely enough was to give occasion for that exercise of sovereignty over death, at the grave of Lazarus, which would precipitate His Own death upon the Cross.

And whom does this wearied sojourner find in the Bethany home?

There is Lazarus—probably a young man with pale face, sunken eyes, and an impoverished frame; a gentle spirit, purified by pain, restrained and serene through much communion with God; just the manner of man who would draw towards himself the sympathetic love of the Lord Jesus. How little Lazarus and this affectionate family realize the proximity of death! how little, the speedy solace of a vanquished grave!

There is Martha, the elder sister; and one can see at a glance that she is one of those good souls who bear the world on their shoulders. Plain, practical, “common sense” woman that she is, she has put the pot on the fire almost as soon as our Lord has stooped to remove His sandals and wash His feet.

There is Mary—not so beautiful a woman perhaps as Martha, only that her eyes seem to reflect the light of more distant horizons, only that a certain repose of manner and serenity of expression suggest habitual recollection of her faculties and interior union with God in the ways of contemplative prayer.

## A Quiet Day at Bethany.

The Lord seats Himself, and begins to speak of heavenly things, and of things soon to come to pass upon the earth. What a solace to His mighty but much tried spirit must this Bethany family have been! What a quiet day to this despised and rejected One from whom His Own countrymen hid their faces! What a refuge, where His love was certain to meet the response of love! For, as S. John tells us, "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." And how like healing balms must the Master's precious words have melted into the soul of Lazarus, fast ripening for the tomb! Mary, restrained by humility, placid because of much familiarity with invisible realities, lost to self-consciousness in the presence of the Messiah, Mary "sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words."

But Martha could not get beyond the thought that the Lord was an hungered; His physical need to which she desired to minister was more to her than her own spiritual need, to which He desired to minister. It was Martha's way, and like the most of us she thought hers the best way. Only at rare intervals did the Messiah stop in at Bethany, and when He came was He not worthy of their best welcome? It was a fine, cordial zeal which would handsomely provide for the beloved Guest who honored her house with His presence. From her point of view the entertainment must correspond with the dignity of the Guest; and to prepare and set it forth becomingly required more labor than

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one pair of hands could give. Why, then, should Mary be idle, when Martha was so overtaxed?

And so this busy woman, "cumbered about much serving," comes to the Messiah and upbraids Him—so intent to feast Him that she forgets her manners!—first upbraids Him for indifference and then arraigns Mary for neglect of duty. "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

Then said the Lord: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her."

## CHAPTER II.

### The Interior Life and Externalism.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AN INTERIOR UNION WITH GOD—FORMS OF EXTERNALISM—THE UNREALITY OF MERE ZEAL.

THAT which constitutes a Christian life is the interior union of man's spirit with God, and this is effected by his being made in Baptism a member of Christ and therefore a child of God. In the Person of Jesus Christ there was a union of the Divine and human natures in such wise that all the fulness of the life of God flowed down into His sinless and exceptionally generated human nature, to the end that His Divine-human life might flow into other human natures as from a fountain. The Incarnation was the inauguration of a new human family,—a fresh start for humanity,—a more glorious manifestation of the Creator's love for His creature, man. As by our natural descent, in the ordinary process of generation, we become

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members of the Adamic family which has lost its union with God, so, by the process of regeneration or new-birth, we are made members of Christ (the second Adam), and in Him are restored to union with God; and the principle of life eternal which dwells in Him in infinite fulness flows over into us, and we are made partakers of His life. He is the vine; we are the branches. The saps and juices of the vine impart to them their vitality. His life is essential, inherent; theirs is derived, dependent, conditional. He can never die. Eternal life is for them only who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality. The interior spiritual union must be sustained and intensified in the soul with the aim of our becoming reproductions, as far as may be in this present life, of the character of Him by whom alone we live, and without whom we are spiritually dead.

Since then the very first and essential idea of a Christian is that his life is an interior union of his soul with the Lord from heaven, the second Adam, it follows that his mind is forbidden to look for the essence of his life in his outward works; and we thence infer that God is much more concerned about the character of the worker, than He is about the work. His kingdom is advanced by what we are rather than by what we do. This is a truth which is easily lost to sight. It therefore needs to be rescued from discredit, and constantly restated.

## The Interior Life and Externalism.

When it is obscured by any form of phariseeism,—as for example, by false theories of the relation between faith and works, as though either were of any virtue without the other; or, by the fiction that righteousness is a cloak to cover our nakedness rather than a cordial poured into our hearts to neutralize the power and cure the disease of sin; or, by an extravagant emphasis put upon the proper and appointed ceremonies of religion; or, by excessive dependence upon the letter rather than the spirit of the records of revelation; or, by the now popular idea of the saving power of zeal by which exterior activities are made in effect to take precedence of the cultivation of interior holiness;—the penalties soon become apparent, and the resulting externalism not only does despite to the Spirit of grace, but seems for the time to arrest all capacity for spiritual development in multitudes who profess and call themselves Christians. Periods of serious declension follow, the pulse of the Church is sluggish and attenuated, heresy lifts its venomous head unrebuted, a low standard of moral observance quickly usurps authority, a frivolous spirit takes the place of serious thought, and to maintain the outward forms of religion, devices are resorted to which sacrifice truth, dignity, and self-respect. Even the ardors of that zeal which has been set up as the sign and assurance of salvation, become fitful and erratic.

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But the most serious characteristic of a dominating externalism in religion is that it inspires the individual heart with a delusive peace. The false assurances of security which are offered satisfy the conscience, and flatter the soul that all goes well with it, whereas that which it fancies to be inward peace is only a state of spiritual stupor. Apparently the characteristic of the Christian of the day is satisfaction with himself. He has responded to the call to be ever doing something practical, in the way of labor or contribution, as the token of his discipleship; and he feels himself justified in reaching comfortable conclusions with regard to his soul's state. Zeal is the new cloak which covers the multitude of sins. He does not wish to be disturbed by rasping suggestions of unreality. He has prejudices against sounds from Sinai. He wishes not to hear any voice that dares to offend good taste by suggesting those noble, yet solemn, themes which alone have power to break hard hearts, and transform worldly lives, and make of men and women called Christian, faithful reproducers of the life of Christ. Nevertheless the Holy Ghost has His mission to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come; and He will see to it that many voices shall be lifted, in these perilous times, to cry out against the terrible hazards of externalism, and to startle those who are soothed to a sense of security by the gospel of optimism, with the cry, "Awake, thou that sleepest!"

## The Interior Life and Externalism.

It is the old revivifying cry of the ages, the voice of the Giver of Life. It is the voice which cried, "Martha, Martha;" and surely in our conditions of spiritual lethargy, it should reach our ears. Surely the words of the Lord Jesus at Bethany are entitled to a new hearing and should arrest attention, arouse thought, and lead to reformation. There is that in these words which, if allowed entrance, will pierce to the very center of the soul, and write anew on the conscience the old truth that the kingdom of God is within us.

## CHAPTER III.

### The One Thing Needful.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER OF MARTHA AND OF MARY—  
TWO THEORIES OF DISCIPLESHIP.

If we take pains to study the character of Martha and of Mary, we shall find that the first needed, and the other had found, the truth that the kingdom of God is within. Nor can we be mistaken; for our Lord, who “needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man,” did not for one moment hesitate to express Himself positively concerning them. Martha was all wrong. And such was the Lord’s instant verdict. She who had faulted her sister was herself at fault. The place of duty for Martha no less than for Mary was at the feet of their Master, when He spake concerning things of eternal moment.

It would appear to be unjust to her, however, to regard Martha as the product and representa-

## The One Thing Needful.

tive of a cold and selfish worldliness. This would be a very superficial interpretation of the scene before us. Instead of contemplating one sister as the type of earth-born zeal, and one as the type of heavenly-mindedness, we should recognize both as friends and disciples of the Lord Jesus, who had been admitted to His confidence to such a degree that when He had reasons for not exposing Himself to premature dangers in the city, He sought and found congenial asylum in their home at Bethany. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." It is true that He administered a distinct though not ungentle rebuke to Martha, while Mary's devotion won for herself the expression of His approval; but the issue involved was not one of essential dissimilarity so much as one of precedence and proportion.

Martha's conception of discipleship emphasized external activity as its more positive and assuring token, not to be slighted or neglected with a view to interior exercises, as if these latter were of primary value over against so much pressing practical duty. Her conscience, taking its cue from her theory of precedence, gave her no rest from cumbersing service, and inspired her with doubt whether her good sister, who seemed to be more concerned to lift her heart into communion with God than to busy her hands in activities largely physical and external, was not a bit visionary. Incessant work she thought to be her vocation.

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There were so many things to be done that the days were too short to afford any large surviving remnant of time and strength for retirement, solitude, silence, thought, prayer. It seemed also like a robbery of Christ to let prayer crowd service to the wall, and to waste in seclusion and meditation the precious hours that should be sacred to philanthropy. She would not venture to repudiate the inner duties, but prayer must be only a whisper let fall as she rushes onward to accomplish her stent of service.

Mary, on the other hand, was dominated by a nobler theory of discipleship. She saw that there is a divine order and precedence of duties. She perceived that service should be permitted to claim only a secondary allegiance. There is a time for all things; and prayer, or the cultivation of the interior life, has the right of precedence; the denial of which would not only tend to spiritual deadness, but would rob external service of its virtue and beauty. In that Bethany home, it was the time for worship, not for work, for tranquil receptivity, and not for fussy exteriority. When activities shall have become opportune, Mary will not fail to be the busy helper of her busy sister; indeed it is evident from Martha's complaint, "my sister hath left me to serve alone," that Mary had been a busy helper until the Lord entered their abode; but after that, one thing only was needful. Mary felt it in her soul as a triumphant conviction. There was

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something within which told her there was now but one thing to do; and so, with all the courage of a will that dared not disobey the heavenly prompting, and would not when God's voice said: "This is the way: walk ye in it!" she chose the better part which would never be taken away from her.

This, then, is the great lesson which comes to us in analyzing these types of character: That the cultivation of the inner life of the soul after the pattern of the Lord Jesus is the primary obligation; that under no conceivable conditions may one seek to be dispensed from this solemn duty on the plea that outward activities are imperious in their demand; and further that if these are not sternly relegated to their place, which is a secondary and subordinate one, they will paralyze spiritual vigor, foster pride, increase self-love and culminate in hypocrisy. God sees the unreality of an exterior life which spends itself in service, but draws back from surrendering the will to Him, from purging the conscience, from grappling with besetting sins, from acquiring the virtue of self-contempt and humility, and from the immense inner strain and labor involved in self-subjugation and the real abandonment of the conquered heart to God. To work in His name only because zeal is the prevailing mode, or because that is a reputable method of giving vent to the superabundance of natural energy; to be very active outwardly but inwardly

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slothful, indifferent, or disloyal; to cast out devils but harbor the devil in one's own heart—what could be morally more inexcusable?

It is not in disparagement of zeal that our Lord insists upon the precedence of spiritual culture. After everything is said for the busy workers that may be, He says there is but one thing needful. Let all the active Marthas choose first that good part, for it shall not be taken away from them. Let the zealous helpers and servers remember that our first work is to become good, and our second to do good. Blessed is the man who, after gaining inward peace through long victories over sin, and after conscious self-abandonment to the control of the indwelling Spirit, cumbers himself with much serving. He only can serve without being careful and troubled about many things who has been taught of God in the school of solitude, silence, and meditation. Interior peace is the divinest stimulus to exterior activity. When the will of God reigns triumphant in the will of His child, God uses the surrendered powers as He could not have done before, in blessed labors for the good of men.

But there is still only one thing really needful in the sense of primary obligation, and that is to dwell in such relation to God that nothing earthly, however allowably fascinating in itself, can attract us in kind or degree as He does; to rest with quiet confidence in the arms of His providential care; to

## The One Thing Needful.

fear no evil since He is with us, since He causes all things to work together for good to them that love Him; to love Him with a love so warm that our hearts beat faster when we think of Him; to think of Him continually; to be always telling Him how much we need His presence, and always speaking our gratitude and showing forth His praise;—this, all this and more than this, describes for the Christian man his first duty, and reveals to him the end transcending all other ends for which God breathed into him the breath of life. May He take away from us all rest, all peace and joy, until we seek and find them in Him, and may He and He Alone be the Wisdom that guides us, the Purity that makes us pure, the Love that transforms us, the Beauty that fascinates us, the End that controls us!

Those who have had many years of contact with the active workers of the Church, of both sexes, have seen much insensibility to the higher privileges of the Christian life, but have also discovered a conscious sense of incompleteness among many, and a positive hunger for closer contact with the invisible realities. Of these some approximate the great renunciation, in their best moments, but are drawn away again to the less heroic paths of exterior activity through lack of a few simple lessons in the science of the interior life. Others give themselves no peace until they have acquired that knowledge of the ways of holiness,

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by which it is possible to live in constant communion with God. May our study of the types of discipleship, represented by Martha and Mary, help all to choose the part which Mary chose!

## CHAPTER IV.

### The Sin of Exteriority.

MARTHA'S ERROR COMMON—SALVATION BY ZEAL—CAUSES:

1. REACTION FROM PROTESTANT SUBJECTIVITY. 2. FALSE THEORY OF SIN.

**E**S has already been intimated, Martha's type of character is numerously represented among Christians in this present day. Mary's type is more rare. With due allowance for the hiddenness of her life, the life which "cometh not with observation," she has a limited following as compared with Martha's wide constituency.

The consuming energy of the secular world has infected the Church with an exterior zeal similar in kind and almost equal in degree. Apparently the belief is general that devotion to outward duty is a sufficient indication of spiritual vitality; and the consciences of many are easily pacified by what are called practical duties, while at the same

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time they are dull of hearing when the Spirit of grace calls them to a more interior life. Cumbered with much serving, they do not love to be warned against the danger of so one-sided a theory of discipleship. Satisfied with their A B C knowledge of God, they do not like to be told that the Church of to-day needs the prayers of men who devote themselves to prayer, more than the labors of men who devote themselves to labor.

There must be a reason for this condition of things. Christian people must have been persuaded by some process of false reasoning, that it is not their primary duty to attain to that spiritual development whereby men may, at least, approximately represent the holiness of their Lord in their lives; or that, conceding the theoretical duty, its fulfilment is to them impracticable in consequence of the distractions of life, the environment of worldliness, and the legitimate demands of duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call them. There may be some who can walk in the paths of Mary's choice, but the Martha type represents all that is practicable to most of us;—such is their plea.

It may be admitted that it might be more easy to advance to the higher walks of sanctity if environment were more favorable; but when God places us where He has, He expects us to rise superior to all the difficulties by which we are environed, and not to surrender to them in the vain dream that

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we would do better if it were easier to do it. What is this but self-will pleading the orderings of God's providence as an excuse for refusing the drawings of His grace? Our Saviour prayed not that we should be taken out of the world, but that we should be kept from the evil. He could have summoned His apostles to His side, and said to each one, as He said to the penitent thief, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise;" but He saw, as we can now see, that it was best for them, for the world, and for the Church, that they should not be taken out of the world. They needed the wholesome frictions of life, the salutary discipline of resisted temptations, the maturing processes of a life of faith in invisible things, the weaning of the spirit from the encroachments of the flesh, the joy of habitual and confirmed preference for God. And moreover the world needed them as examples of love, patience, heavenly-mindedness, kindness, wisdom, and consecration.

Still further, the plea just mentioned reflects upon the wisdom of the word of the Lord that one thing is needful, and contradicts His verdict, "Mary hath chosen the good part." God never commands or commends the impracticable. It is possible to live very near to God under every conceivable environment, and what possible is our highest duty.

If then we must acknowledge that our Lord's words are as binding upon us as upon Martha and

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Mary, if we must admit in the teeth of all our externalism and absorption in service that there is something more momentous than these, and that God never lays upon us an impracticable obligation, why should any man longer expose himself to sore and serious penalties by disproportionate devotion to external activities?

It is a law of our being that a man's predominant passion gives color and tone to his spiritual state. When misguided Christians spend their best energies upon outward duties, to the disparagement of the primary obligation of making God their All in all, it is obvious that their controlling motive is a low one, and that they are themselves of the earth, earthly, however religious their activities may seem to be; and if their mistake escapes the charge and penalty of practical opposition to God, it is only because they know not what they do. They do not see with clear vision the divine order and proportion. They have ears, but hear not the Voice which calls them to higher conceptions of life, and nobler attainments in holy living. But it must nevertheless appear to the mind which will pause to think, that if there are two standards, one instituted by the conventionalism of a worldly discipleship, and one by Him who has commanded us to be holy as He is holy, then conformity to the lower standard is in effect a protest against the Divinely established order, which it is as unsafe as it is unwise to seek

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to revolutionize. Where do Christian men get the courage to do it?

With reference to the causes which give rise to this substitution of a low type of discipleship for that which was fixed and set forth for the Church when the life of Christ was made our pattern, we may say, speaking generally, that it grows out of the strong earthly bent of the soul, even where it is under the partial influence of Christian motives.

But there are certain antecedent causes, other than this general one, of which some may be specified.

1. As a characteristic feature of our current discipleship, this extreme partiality for external service is due to a reaction from the abnormal subjectivity of the modern "protestant" movement. Themselves a reaction (excessive, as we now see) from the evils of an extreme ceremonialism, those theories of the Christian life which required believers to plunge into the depths of their consciousness for grounds of assurance, have held long and powerful control. They taught men to rest in feeling as the test of faith, and to identify a satisfactory emotional condition with the witness of the Spirit. The frames and moods of the soul were watched and analyzed, and their fluctuations were deemed to be an unerring token of Divine favor or displeasure, although the exaltation or depression might be no more than the mental reflex of physical conditions. This exag-

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gerated subjectivity, so long prevalent, has finally reached its inevitable reaction. The pendulum has swung from pious but stilted emotionalism to external activity as the badge and test of discipleship. Instead of the old inquiry, what are my feelings? the question is, what am I doing? And so great is this reaction that even those types of interior devotion which belong to the long ages of Catholic history, and which involve the submission of the will rather than the excitation of the emotions as the mark of God's presence within us, do not retain their power as they ought. Zeal substitutes its busy fingers for the clasped hands of worship, and regards time spent in the secret culture of the soul as abstracted from the superior claims of "work." Alas! it is much more easy to bear forward the banner of the Cross than to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof! Martha's is the popular side, beyond peradventure.

2. The indisposition of many to rise to more heroic levels of Christian living may be traced to another cause,—the prevalence of a false theory as to the nature and turpitude of sin. Opinions with regard to sin depend largely on the notions held as to the character of God. The error alluded to makes much of the Fatherhood of God, much at least of the phrase; and by this phrase it means an amiable, easy-going, indulgent Fatherhood. In effect, it declares that God does not take critical

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cognizance of our actions nor judge us closely as to our moral states; that sin is after all only a harsh term used to denote the little faults and foibles of our excellent nature; that we are born into an imperfect world without opportunity to choose our lot; that we are environed from infancy with circumstances that have more to do in determining the kind of lives we lead than our own wills have; that there is vastly more misfortune than turpitude in sin (if the term must be used!), and that the Father will not fail to smooth it all over in some benignant way at last. We are told that God sees no birth-sin in a child, and that Holy Baptism is only a ceremonial recognition of the child's anterior relation to the Father. It is insisted that sin has wrought no wrong against God whereby He cannot longer deal with man as in a state of innocence: therefore no propitiation was or is necessary; that God needeth not to be reconciled to man: therefore the Cross effected nothing upon God; that man needs to be reconciled to God only by coming to himself.

But this "speech of Ashdod" does not represent the teaching of our Lord, which, while it reveals God as our Father, and Charity as the crowning attribute of His nature, tells us that the Father is exquisitely sensitive to sin. "Sin is God's evil." It is such an unholy thing that He would not be God if He hated it not. We must reverse all our conceptions of Him if we are to think of Him as

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looking with equal eye upon those who wilfully disregard His wishes, and those who so abhor sin that it is the battle of their life to overcome it; for if thus indifferent to moral contrasts He would be less perfect than we are who cannot admire vice and despise virtue. Sin is the imperative contradiction of God, and in its least aggravations it is a menace of our happiness, for the smallest sins are like sparks which may grow to conflagrations.

The poles are not more separate than these interpretations of the Fatherhood of God. Expressed in dogmatics and ethics, two contradictory religions result, and two contradictory theories of the spiritual life. They cannot dwell together in harmonious relations. In the process of time it must become evident that this smooth theology is another than that which the Lord taught, as in the Sermon on the Mount. Its idea of Christ is not that of the Apostles, and when it comes fully to its growth, it will reject the Creeds and the Church, the Word and the Ministry, the Sacraments, the Atonement, and the Incarnation, and become in flower and fruit what it is now in seed, a natural religion, a departure from the second Adam, and a reversion to the first, a preference for the family of a progenitor who failed over that of One who could not fail. It is a sad spectacle to see children of the second Adam ignoring their spiritual transplantation, trusting themselves to the demonstrated weakness of the old Adamic

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arm; sad indeed to see them cast away the armour and the shield, the sword and the helmet, with which God has armed them, and rush forth to do battle against the fierce foes of the soul, with nothing but Adam's dulled and broken sword in their hands; sad, thrice sad, to see priests ready to barter their supernatural birthright for a mess of nature's pottage.

If God does not look upon sin as inherently abominable, there is no reason why man should do so. The publican's cry and the penitent thief's prayer have no meaning, and self-accusation and humble repentance and all that mystery of abjection which holy men experience, and which have been accounted for by their intimacy with the eternal Light in whose blaze the most venial fault seems black, are only pious delusions. In this beautiful world, of which humanity is the crown and glory, let the new gospel of optimism march to victory! Let others enjoy a monopoly of the dream called holiness, and the illusions of an interior life; let them shed their tears and beat their breasts; let them waste their strength in disciplines and fastings; let them retreat to secret places and spend silent hours in meditation and communion; as for us, *laborare est orare!*

This is the polite and pestilent phariseeism which infects many Christian people without their being conscious of the degeneration, and which paralyzes their occasional struggles after a closer

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walk with God. The first thing which they need to hear is the danger of it; for it must be a dangerous thing to neglect the paramount duties of spiritual purification, through an excess of devotion to external activities. It is a sin which will crush them if they do not crush it. For the love of God is the first and great commandment, and the other law, if like unto it, is also secondary to it, the love of our neighbor.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Duty of Perfection.

A THIRD CAUSE: WRONG VIEW OF THE END OF MAN—LUKE-WARMNESS AND ITS DANGERS—THE ACQUISITION OF RELATIVE PERFECTION.

**E**NOTHER reason for the prevalent externalism of Christian people may be mentioned. They seem to have become blind to the primary end of man and of his life upon the earth. These nimble sailors mount aloft fearlessly, handle the sails dexterously, discharge most zealously every duty above and below—never was there finer seamanship; but the compass seems to be broken and the pole-star eclipsed.

The ultimate reason for any created thing will be found by passing beyond it and all other things, until the mind reaches Him who created all. Many secondary ends may be specified, but all converge upon the one infinite motive of human life. All

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things come of Him as first cause, and return to Him as final cause.

Therefore the primary end of man is God, who made him for Himself. We can perceive in ourselves as individuals and as members of a vast family of one blood, reasons why we exist and why existence is so precious to us; but we must admit these to be secondary. The thoughtful nature soars above them, without effort or repugnance, finding no resting place until its wings are folded in the presence of the eternal Creator.

Since, then, the ultimate reason for our existence is in God, the primary motive of our life should be God. The prayer is often on our lips—"that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy Holy Name." "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." Much more must man created in His image, find his end in his being or becoming a contributor to the universal doxology.

It is, then, a perversion of our end, and a contradiction of the order of God, if we allow ourselves to be actuated by motives that get their primary impulse in ourselves or in our fellow beings.

The results condemn it. For a stream will not rise higher than its source. There can be no high-souled and heroic devotion to our personal interests, or to the interests of the kingdom of God

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unless we are primarily devoted to God. Activity on a lower basis of motive brings the inevitable penalty. An excess of external activity dries up the fountains of interior devotion to Him, and produces a tepid spirituality upon which we are taught He looks with abhorrence. "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art luke-warm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." "I would thou wert cold or hot,"—does God mean that He would prefer His child to be an abandoned sinner, a slave of passion or drink, a secret unbeliever? Hardly that; but it must be that He sees fewer obstacles in the way of his salvation than of the lukewarm disciple's. The latter is good and to spare according to his own standard; he is quite satisfied with himself; his praises are sung and his abounding activities are appreciated by the half-worldly devotees of current religionism. It is a hard task to cure one who thinks he is whole and needs not a physician. Interior lukewarmness is his ideal and he would have all men conform to his standard. What a spectacle to astonish angels and men! A luke-warm inner life, and everything that is evil in the world *not* lukewarm! The adversary, hot and panting in his chase for souls, shames such a discipleship. Lust, red-lipped with hot passion, shouts its disgrace. Drunkenness, pawning its rags to buy another draught of poison, looks down upon it. Errorists, spending themselves to draw souls away

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from the Faith, laugh at such champions. There is no lukewarm world, no lukewarm flesh, no lukewarm devil, but alas! many lukewarm Christians excusing themselves from the feet of Jesus because His service is more to be valued than Himself. Such a state is one of awful hazards, for behind him who will not seek first the kingdom of God which "is within you," lurks the possibility of perdition. Such an one may by God's mercy experience conversion, or he may lapse from his exterior zeal into disgraceful sin, or he may persist in his lukewarmness; and what then? "I will spue thee out of My mouth; because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

There is no question which a Christian man should ask himself more frequently than this: Unto what end am I numbered among the children of God? Unto what finality does this life I am living here on the earth tend? And how influential upon my character should that ultimate end be? We all agree that he should aim high, and that if his aim be not higher than a worldly life, a selfish life, a sensual life, he has not left himself any claim or right to be numbered with the disciples of Christ. We all agree that God has called him to a nobler endeavor than that of conforming to the conventional discipleship of the day, the compro-

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mise standard which clothes its worldliness in a thin gauze of religionism. The great God in making Himself his end has ordained that he should seek to become like Him. The one dominant *aim* of the Christian life must be perfection of character to the extent of the utter abolition in the soul of the moral effects of sin, so that the soul being made entirely pure and being newly created in the image of God, shall finally, as the ultimate point of attainment, be fitted for His presence forever. The will of God contemplates a discipleship which shall distinctly aim day by day to reproduce the life of Christ. Or, in other words, each man's first duty is character-building after the Divine model, which is a perfect one; "Who is the image of the invisible God." Perfection of character, then, is the Christian aim, and God has not called us to a lower end than Himself. Terrible, therefore, must be his sin who lives with reference to an imperfect ideal, a wretched piece of dirty pottery, instead of the white image of Christ.

There are many false notions of perfection. The old and tried doctrine is that as we were made for God our whole life must tend towards God. Ultimate perfection can be arrived at only when we shall have become like God. We cannot attain this in the present life, but we shall never attain it in any life unless we presently aim at it. "*Finis est principium,*" said S. Thomas (the end is the beginning), that is, the end which is absolute

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perfection must govern us in seeking that relative perfection which is now practicable. We know that God will not permit imperfect souls to enter His presence; if He should they could not endure the splendors of His ineffable holiness; and yet, we are all hoping to enter His presence! Well, then, we must at once and always seek perfection at any price; in thought, word and deed, above all in our interior nature, it must be our life's business to tend towards absolute perfection. If we will only lay aside the erroneous conception of heaven that it is to be the final reward of our imperfection, and think of it as the logical point of arrival of a soul which has long labored to be fitted for that pure environment; if we will think of it not as a gift of mercy to the sinner, but as the congenial atmosphere of one who has drank to the full of mercy's fountains of grace ere it is reached, we shall be more influenced by our end. "Without holiness," (that is without character builded up in the likeness of Christ), "no man shall see the Lord."

Relative perfection, or that degree of perfection which is practicable in the present life, is internal and external.

External perfection is conduct corresponding with the law of God and the precepts of the Church. It exhibits attachment to the means of grace, neglects no known duty, loves the gates of Zion, busies its hands in serving others, and spreading the kingdom wherever it can. But external tokens

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of holiness are delusive and soul-destroying, unless they flow from, represent, and express internal perfection. There is a witchery of self-deception in the human heart even when that heart is touched with grace, which persuades us to accept outward decencies and activities and observances as substitutes for interior love and loyalty. Painstaking moralities, zealous labors, conscientious routines of duty, are nothing worth by themselves, as helps to character building. Excess of activity is often the cloak that conceals lack of love. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." It is, therefore, evident that relative perfection, or the attainment of all that is possible in this life, has its rise in the secret depths of the spirit. "The kingdom of God is within you." The Holy Spirit has chosen our spirit as the point of His contact with us, from our Baptism onward, and it is His voice which whispers when in our hearts we hunger to rise above the level of external duty and know more of God. He is our guide when we seek Him, and when we seek Him He seeks us. He wants *us*. He can do without our poor little activities, what we call our work, our zeal, our enthusiasm. He wants *us*. "My son, give Me thine heart." In a thousand ways He could make up the loss to the Church if you or I should never lift hand again in the way of service; but the love of a million souls

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would not compensate Him for the loss of your love or mine. He made us to the end that we may love Him supremely. The loss of the love of one soul is to Him a distinct, irreparable loss. Love is more to Him than service, and more to the Church; for it is character that tells, rather than labor. Zealous activities can make a great "hurly-burly" in the world, but power belongs only to the quiet influence of lives that are inwardly consecrated to God, and that die daily to self and sin.

There is a great deal that goes by the name of "church work" which God would not miss if it were to cease,—all that is done selfishly or self-righteously, from social and secular motives, because it is the fashion, or because nature seeks a vent for its buoyant energies. Alas! it is easier to show zeal than to feel love, than to practise self-denial or lead a life of hidden communion with God;—easier to do works that are seen of men than to cultivate secret penitence. "My son, give Me thine heart." It is not your activities that I want. Above all I do not want your service without your heart. I want you, I want your love. This is the first and great commandment. Obey that, and the second, which is like unto it, will never be dishonored.

## CHAPTER VI.

### The Strivings of the Spirit.

CONVENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP—THE LIFE OF OUR LORD—THE HIGHER TYPE—VISITATIONS FROM ABOVE—HOW RECEIVED—ASPIRATIONS—RESOLUTIONS—PERSEVERANCE.

THE truths revealed to us as we behold and hear what is to be heard and seen in the house of Martha and Mary at Bethany are, that there is a lower stage of the Christian life, of which external obedience and active service are the characteristic features; and that there is a higher stage characterized by personal aim after inward conformity with the will of God, as a duty to which all external service should bear a secondary and consequential relation. For, if the real life of a man is the life of his soul, soul-culture is his chief obligation.

Two opposing forces are at work in every Christian soul. When the earthly force gains commanding power, the product is the Martha type

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of character. But many of these Marthas are restless, dissatisfied, unhappy, conscious of an aching void within, just because they have settled down to the conventional discipleship of the times. There is much natural zeal and many active virtues, but how few live the life of the Crucified! How few seek to reproduce Him in their daily walk! And yet we all acknowledge that the only worthy aim of a true follower of Christ is to become like Him in all His imitable perfections.

Why is it that with all the current study of the Scriptures and the superabundance of exhortation, there is so much ignorance of the character of Christ? Is it because men have been taught to look too exclusively upon the dead Christ? We are indeed reconciled to God by His death, but the other side of the Christian gospel is that we are "saved by His life." And what a wonderful life it was! Let us reverently contemplate some of its features:

1. He led an interior rather than an exterior life. This was the one thing needful to Him, and it is that which He commends to all the Marthas who seek to be dispensed from it because of imperious outward duties. The culture of the soul must have precedence over every other duty. Zeal and service and missionary ardor are healthful only when they fall into line under the headship of interior devotion to and communion with God. He was faithful to all the requirements of the

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Church, but the Church first touched Him in the secret depths of the soul. He went up to the temple to pray, but the love of prayer made a temple of the mountain side or the garden's shades. His whole interior being was aflame with pure devotion.

2. His will was iron to do the Father's will. God Only was the first object of His thoughts and feelings, the sole rule of His conduct; and so pure was His intention, so boundless His charity, so absolute His self-abandonment to all that the Father did and required Him to do, that He came to be known as sinless, and the very judge who passed upon His fate was forced to exclaim: "I find no fault in this Man." But to this was added a voice from Heaven saying: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." No wonder, for the dearest thing in life to Jesus Christ was the Father's will.

3. His life was one of constant communion with the Father, by which we mean that thinking of God had honored precedence of every thought. He thought in God when He thought of other things. He literally prayed "without ceasing," in this, that the spirit of prayer never departed from Him. He had His external business, and it was daily His duty to meet and talk with others; but nothing so absorbed His attention that His conscious spirit ceased to point like the compass to the pole-star in the heavens.

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4. He never lost the balance of His soul in the midst of trials and temptations. How awful was His earnestness when He and His passion met face to face! "I have set My face like a flint." He took up into Himself a humanity which displayed the utmost possible heroism in suffering, the utmost courage, fearlessness, determination and valor. If in the supreme hour, when for our sakes He suffered the agony of Gethsemane, He exclaimed, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me," His own will gave answer to His physical shrinking, "Nevertheless not My will but Thine be done."

5. In the hour of temptation He was a rock of resistance. He overcame even when evil presented itself as a seeming good. With all the might of a pure soul He bore down upon the adversary and drove him crushed and broken from the field.

6. Nothing could impair the perfection of His happiness. It was a continual joy to do the work He came to do. The sorest pains, the contumelies heaped upon Him, the defection of friends, the revilings of enemies, did not agitate the inner serenity of His soul. So full of bliss was His heart that He could impart its overflow to others. "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Why is it that we are so ready to expend our very vitality in the achievement of earthly purposes, and yet so devoid of ambition to follow this

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wonderful Example and become all that we may as spiritual men? Is it not evident that we need to be touched by some awful stimulus from above?

When one considers how attractive this inner life is, how it is commanded of God, how in its essence it is heaven itself, and has only to expand to its own perfection to become heaven forever (for it shall never be taken away), and how practicable it is,—nay, how much more easy it is to aim at perfection than to satisfy one's conscience with imperfection—when one considers all this he must wonder that so many draw back from the campaigns and battlefields of the soul that lie between us and that day of victory when self-love shall be held in subjection, the passions mortified, the tongue bridled, self-will bound in chains, the conscience purged, every infirmity mastered, and Christ formed within, the hope of glory.

On the other hand, the force from above when humbly received and permitted to dominate the will without resistance or reserve, results in the character of which Mary was a lovely example. It is the restoration of the soul's union with God. And this interior union of the human spirit with God should be *the primary aim and obligation of every Christian life.*

For this reason God will not suffer earthly forces to assail the soul without bringing adverse forces to bear. Martha is not abandoned to her delusion. With what warning accents does the

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Lord repeat her name, "Martha, Martha," for He would not leave her to herself. Nor does He withhold His voice from any conscience. To most of us there come moments of Divine visitation when the Holy Spirit tells of an inner life of heretofore unimagined possibilities. For God will not, without protest, suffer His children to spend themselves upon outward tasks and drudgeries. He has given them hearts to love Him, tongues to praise Him, spirits to commune with Him, minds to meditate upon Him, as well as hands to work for Him. He would have them do all such good works as He has prepared for them to walk in, but He would teach them that "this is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

It is in such moments as these that men grow weary of themselves, and sick to think how vast the distance between their actual and their possible; it is then that they wonder how they could have congratulated themselves upon the possession of qualities which they now see are wanting in them; it is then that their pride over some display of superficial zeal wilts into self-contempt, and they wonder at the infinite patience which has borne with their blindness so long; it is then that they exclaim:

"O for a man to arise in me,  
That the man I am may cease to be."

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God forbid that we fail to regard these Divine visitations as critical moments in our lives! They are intended to reveal the real condition of the soul. They show how cumbersome cares and secondary duties are really crowding God from His throne within, and they suggest desires after better things.

The one thing needful is to nurse and foster such desires until the spark grows to a flame. Who are we that we should be disobedient unto the heavenly vision? Why should we draw back from the approaches of such faithful love? Advance is practicable. Within reach (but never reached by passive waiting) are the life of self-abandonment to God, of repose in God, of ceaseless prayer to God, the life of spiritual humility and deadness to sense pleasures; and how dare we shrink from these attainable blessings under the plea that they are not for us, but for some hypothetical coterie of heaven's favorites whom men call "the saints?" Thankful should we be that the Holy One plants these desires within us. Desire, nourished, strengthened, watched over day by day, grows like a seed well watered and sunned; like a seed also it may be buried beyond resurrection, so that what was unto life shall only make corruption more corrupt. It is of the very nature of God's grace in the Sacraments to reveal His spiritual beauty, and thus to inspire within our hearts a desire for closer union with Him. To mistake these sacred promptings

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for a sentiment or a whisper from nature is to grieve the Spirit of God. When He comes beneath our roof let us sit at His feet and drink in His words as Mary did, rather than cling to our activities with satisfied hearts.

It is a critical moment in the soul's history; for the Divine visitation may pass from us because unheeded; or, it may lead on to the fruition of these desires by the formation of a firm and deliberate resolution to turn the whole current of life in the direction which they indicate. It will not answer to rest content with longings. God's approaches are addressed to *the will*. The hungry soul cannot feed upon its desire for food, but must resolve to eat of the pure white manna that has dropped from heaven. Think of the power of a timely act of the will! S. Paul was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision" when a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shone round about him, and the voice of Jesus said, "Saul, Saul." The Blessed Virgin's will,—how quickly it flashed back her reply to the angel of the Annunciation, "Be it unto me according to thy word!" What results followed the prodigal son's resolve, "I will arise and go to my father!" A strong purpose formed and strongly carried into effect is the first duty. We shall not get out of ourselves until we determine to do it.

But as desires are only a lovely dream until they awaken and become resolutions, resolutions

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are no more than a waking dream unless they are specific. It is not sufficient to propose, in a certain general sense, to follow the example of Mary rather than that of Martha, and to aspire after something very beautiful and holy, but of which no definite conception has been formed. Such generous generalities are hiding-places of self-deceit. He who would follow the call of God must avoid all subterfuges. The end of desire and resolve is not a vague inclination in the direction of goodness. Our sins are the most positive and clear-cut entities in the world. There is nothing indefinite in the activities that are now usurping the place that of right belongs to God. It follows, therefore, that a determination to turn out the usurper must particularize its proposed acts with honest precision. The will must resolve to begin by attacking specific sins, saying for example: This day I will curb the appetite which has got despotic control over me, and if I fail I will punish myself by denying myself something which I shall miss; or, I will attack and try to tame my temper; or, to-morrow, no stress of business shall rob me of a definite time for prayer; or, firmly do I vow to God that on next Saturday I will spend fifteen minutes, by the clock, in preparation for the next day's Holy Eucharist; or, this tongue shall not put into words the unkind thoughts which my mind harbors against one whom I do not like. These illustrations will suffice to show how one

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who passes from desires to resolutions can *corner himself by specific engagements*. Otherwise his lofty purposes will dissolve and disappear.

But perseverance is of the very essence of a fixed and sturdy purpose. In a matter which involves eternal issues, one ought not to trifle with God by offering to Him fitful impulses that exhaust themselves in resolving. Resolution must be a constant and self-repeating quantity, in order to fortify our minds against the discouragement which repeated failures to fulfil our purposes will suggest, but still more to enable us to prevent such failures. Frequent reiteration of the same act creates a habit. "Habit if not resisted becomes necessity" (S. Augustine), and this is as true of the spirit as of the mind or the body. Our acts make our habits, and we are what our habits are. Martha illustrates a life-time of acts crystalized into the habit of being careful and troubled about many things. Mary's tranquil demeanor and simplicity of desire show her to have acquired the habit of concentrating the soul on God without distraction.

## CHAPTER VII.

### Self-Surrender.

NECESSITY FOR GUIDANCE—SELF-ABANDONMENT TO GOD AND  
HIS WILL—THE ACT BECOMES THE HABIT.

BUT to form resolutions is to put on the armour only; how shall the soldier of an aroused faith handle his weapons? how fight wisely? how be guided and generalized in this serious conflict? For guidance is indispensable. We have no resources in ourselves with which to begin this "newness of life." "He who would be his own teacher becomes the pupil of a fool" (S. Bernard). A Christian of the Martha type may be expert in outward activities but is a very babe in the interior life. He enters upon a new era in which he would seek a closer walk with God, but his faculties are bent in an earthly direction. He needs careful help, loving rebuke, wise instruction, in the process of bending them back towards God. The old Adam immedi-

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ately seeks to lead him back to the old life, the region which to nature's eye now more than before presents lovely landscapes undisfigured by self-denials, crosses, watchings, and contradictions of the flesh; but he hears also the Holy Spirit telling him of the folly of hungering for scenes that charm no longer when they are once possessed. He sees the danger of following a guide so false and fallible as the former, and realizes that it is only the voice from above which can lead him into ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. Self-guidance is an impracticable art, and as such he must renounce it. Children must not go on long and perilous journeys unattended.

Martha, who stood entrenched behind the tools and traps of her kitchen, thinking to make a feast and take proper care of her Divine Guest, found that her duty lay in precisely the opposite direction. He did not need her care so much as she needed His. She needed to put herself in His mighty keeping, and be guided in the way of holiness. The secret of sanctification lies in our being made holy, not in making ourselves holy. There may be self-made men,—there are no self-made saints. We can acquire only what is imparted, and God only can impart. "Open thy mouth wide,"—this represents our only capability; "and I will fill it,"—such is the prerogative and promise of God. There are many paths to perfection, many helping Sacraments, many methods of prac-

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tising holiness; there are many books to teach and many wise ones in the science of sanctity to direct how to live for God; there are many strong uplifting influences favorable to one who would live an interior life. Just think how Holy Eucharists girdle the earth every day, and offer the merit of Christ for them that thirst for God! These means and influences should neither be depreciated nor despised, as they are, to an alarming extent. Many souls are blind to see and numb to feel the attractions of the hidden life because they seek it not where ordinarily it is to be found. They honor not God in His means of grace and miss Him when they seek Him without,—the sore penalty of self-sufficiency. Self-guidance is a dangerous experiment. But necessary as means are, they are necessary only as means. Without the efficiency that is from above, they would be empty of significance or force, though until the despisers of means can show them to be separate from grace it will still be sin to despise them. Efficaciously, God only can make us holy. He only knows us,—our needs, our perils, our trials, our hungerings, our weakness, our past, our prospects; and He only can impart the grace that is suited to each individual. If His means seem at times to miscarry and end in disappointment and failure, it is for the same reason that He Himself spreads out His hands all the day long to a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that is not

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good, after their own thoughts. “He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not.”

Our primary present duty then is to honor the means of grace, because God works in them and by them by impartations of guiding grace.

Our concurrent duty is to transfer ourselves to Him who imparts. We must offer ourselves up to God in such an absolute sense that we may be said to *abandon ourselves into His hands*. Thereby, we renounce self-guidance; a renunciation as difficult as it is necessary, for there is in man such an invincible sense of spiritual self-sufficiency, our capacity of self-help seems to be so real, that with the sincerest desires after holiness, we are slow to realize that the only co-operation we can offer is to be ready and willing in the day of His power.

This willingness will express itself by the utter surrender of ourselves into His guiding hands. Distinctly, and by formal acts, the will abdicates its throne as an independent authority, and submits itself to the sovereignty of the Divine will, not as a servitude, but as a migration from false to true liberty. That there is any freedom out of God is an utterly baseless illusion. He only is free who freely acts the wise, holy, loving, and generous will of God. True liberty does not consist in the

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power to choose evil. Who is so free as God who cannot sin? To be really free we must rise above our little level, and ask God to guide us according to His good pleasure.

This abdication is entirely a reasonable service, because, while we are made up of limitations, He is the Perfect, the Absolute, the Unconditioned, by whom and for whom all things consist. Self-consecration is the duty which the creature owes to the Creator. It is the natural homage of the imperfect to the Perfect. But He is as perfect in His glory and beauty and love as in His power. It is therefore essential to our surrender to God's will in every event, that we have a true admiration and love for Him, as well as a lowly submission to His authority. For we could not persuade ourselves to consecrate our wills to One who was not divinely benevolent. Hence the Christian who aspires to perfection, through self-abandonment, will enlarge his conceptions of the character of God. Beginning with his present measure of knowledge, he will employ his powers of devout thought in acquiring higher views of the essential glories and attractions of this wonderful God. O, could we but have immediate revelation, so far as we could bear it, of the infinite moral splendor of His being, every Martha would in the instant be transformed into a Mary! It would be a revelation of unutterable affection, a fascination of love, that would quench all these earthly glimmers of

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light which now attract us. Great is the shame and the sin of it that we make so little of God.

But to know Him as we ought is an education, and we must plod on patiently. It is everything to begin, however. Begin to-day to make just a little more of God's guidance than you did yesterday; be a little more watchful of your tongue, a little more real in your prayers, a little more charitable in your judgments of others, a little more thankful for the dear Father's patience and kindness; and so, day by day, a little more and a little more, until after awhile you will find a great change come over you, and you will wonder how you could have lived so long without God or with such a little idea of God. Years will roll on; more and more God will become the best part of your life, your constant guide and guard; and then, perhaps, you will be able to say, He is my All in all.

Self-surrender to God is a reasonable service, also, because of His relation to everything. Convinced of our own insufficiency, we see Him so close to His creatures, and to all that comes to pass, that nothing can happen without Him. Avoiding the impious conclusion that He is the author of sin, recognizing the existence of evil in His universe as at present an insoluble mystery, and not doubting the testimony of consciousness that the human will is free, we may still think of every event as a shadow that conceals His Pres-

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ence. His will is related to it in the order of fiat, or in the order of permission. In the light of this Divine immediateness—the immediateness of One who transcends His own creation, however,\*—we see in the passing history of every hour a panoramic expression of His good pleasure. Every event is an appeal to us to say, “Thy will be done.” What then is self-abandonment but our response to this appeal, by which we make habitual consecration of our wills to the will of God thus manifested? It would not be entire if we refused to accept or murmured in accepting God as revealed in all that is. But in looking at all things as they come and go, in ceaseless fluctuation, we must see that whatever is at any given moment the ordering of God is His best present form of blessing. Every event is a shrine in which He may be worshipped. All things work together for good to them that love God. The difficulties which faith encounters in associating all things with His will are not problems to love, for love has power to

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\* He is behind everything, above everything, and in a sense in everything that exists or happens. The doctrine of the immanence of God is as old as truth itself. If God, however, is immanent in the world as in a prison, and is a prisoner in His own world, then He has made something as great as Himself and stronger than He is. It would be hard to revere such a being. But He is immanent only in the sense that He is the Omnipresent ultimate force and will, the first and final cause, the Creator and Upholder, in whom we live and move and have our being; but He transcends what He has made or permitted by as much as the Infinite transcends the finite. He is infinitely above and beyond, while potentially within all things.

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rise to the height of finding this God of love everywhere, and everywhere yielding to the attractive power of His Presence by surrender to His wisdom and goodness.

And let us mark with special emphasis that this making one's self over into the keeping hands of God is a distinct act—one might say a distinct transaction. It is not a pious affectation, a piece of religious sentimentalism, a spiritual illusion conceived in the breasts of cloistered visionaries; but is *solid reality for the most prosaic of Christians*; a distinct act done in a moment and to be repeated until it becomes habitual, whether laboring or resting from labor, at home or abroad, in the whirl of business or kneeling at the altar, whether praying or praising, in sorrow or in joy, in plenty or want, in good or ill repute, sick or well, whether the world smiles or frowns, wherever he is, whatever he does, he is always engaged in interior acts of the will by which he transfers himself into the hands of the Keeper of souls. It has become the habit of his life to abandon himself to God.

The annals of religion are beautified with the constant presence of this grace. The spirit of the entire Psalter is, "Put your trust in the Lord." The hearts of the ancient saints were touched to ecstasy because God was their refuge. To Him they carried their fears and burdens, because He was their everlasting strength. To Him they

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lifted their noblest songs, hiding themselves in the secret of His presence from the pride of man. They clung with tender devotion to that secret of the saints: "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." What a triumph of self-abandonment was Job's when he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!" And how distinctly we see apostle after apostle leaving all in obedience to the Master's call, "Follow Me!" Who but S. Paul could have exclaimed, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day?" How splendid S. Peter's picture of the unfading heaven reserved for those "who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be relieved in the last time"! The same jubilant tone appears in the Christian literature of all the ages. Everywhere the song is of God, the strong Keeper of them that trust in Him, and that transfer themselves to the blessed custody of His hands for time and eternity.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Self-Oblation.

OUR LORD'S PERFECT SELF-SURRENDER—THE EXPERIENCE  
OF S. PAUL.

THAT the spirit of self-oblation should be a characteristic grace of the Christian life in its best development, was the natural result of the beautiful but mysterious devotion of the Son of God. Those who hunger to exhaust the possibilities of grace should study with an awful interest the acts of our Lord's perfect oblation of Himself to the Father, and then earnestly strive, so far as they may, to reproduce them in their lives.

Our Divine Lord's self-surrender was without reservation, a whole burnt-offering. He gave His entire Person and both His Natures. It is easy for us to keep back part of the price, easy to dream that we have surrendered all when many a reserve of self-love lies concealed in our hearts; when we

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still secrete some wretched resentment or prejudice, or give ourselves the benefit of the doubt in an uncertain case of conscience, or shrink from severe tests of humility; when we rebel at the lash of discipline, or nurse concealed pride over our spiritual attainments, or imagine that we are something when we are nothing, or assume to be a little better than someone else. These are the little foxes that gnaw the vines of a perfect oblation, our only safety against their mischief being to offer them also, in all their littleness, to God. When we can learn to offer and transfer ourselves, *just as we are*, with all our imperfections on our heads, our oblation will have become "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." We have nothing but ourselves to offer.

Our Lord's self-oblation was most costly. Follow the story from the wail of the Infant upon the Virgin Mother's breast to the agonizing cry on Calvary, "It is finished." Language fails to compute what He paid as the price of our redemption; but this we know, that with that intent He impoverished Himself. He suffered Himself to fall as far from heaven as He could without sin.

Unlike Him we are ever counting the cost. We would make speed to surrender ourselves into God's hands, provided we might do so upon our own terms. But He will not accept a divided offering; we must "give all to find all." He that loses his life shall find it. In choosing God for our

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chief good we choose our losses as well as our gains, all that He takes away or bids us leave behind, as well as all that He sends. The more we die to self-love the more we live in the love of God. The severities and disciplines which are necessary to us end in songs of rejoicing. The Master puts responsibilities upon us, crowds sacred duties into every day of our lives, tosses us back and forth in the loom of sorrow, threshes us on the floor of tribulation, that we may make not less but more of Him, more and more, until He becomes Everything in everything to us. After that, service is recreation. He is the Holy First and Final End of life, and service is the grateful return of a constraining love that has found its inspiration in God.

Is it not passing strange that the simple duty of walking in the blessed steps of our Lord often bursts upon the mind like a new revelation? Why should we have remained so long blind to the rudiments of the Christian life? Why did we live years of bondage to fear, of interior unrest, of unguided groping in spiritual twilight, before this truth burst in splendor upon our minds—this simple duty of making ourselves over by distinct acts into God's hands? And yet it is impossible that God's help should fail when a soul puts itself into His keeping hands, and abides there. Sin can have no sovereign control, nor make successful attempt to regain lost territory in such a case, simply

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because God has accepted that which was committed to Him. The process of its final banishment cannot be arrested; and the daily victories which now begin to brighten the daily strife, will have their consummation in the exceeding peace of a soul that has found its eternal home deep in the bosom of God.

This was the pathway which S. Paul traversed. In his utter weakness, in his despair of self-delivery from temptation, he cast himself (with his weakness) upon God; he made a highway for grace by leveling nature to the earth; and it was then, but not till then, that he saw revealed the Divine secret of Christian growth: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And what was the effect upon him? Why, he at once arose as on wings to a higher atmosphere; and those things which had been so hard to bear become a source of actual consolation to him. "Therefore," he cried, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

And such has been the experience of all who have found that pathway, who have gone to God and put their weakness into His hands. Struggling with besetting sins only to find themselves bond-slaves still, they commended the keeping of their souls to God. There remained much to do in the ways of self-examination, contrition, confession,

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reparation, prayer and praise, worship and sacrament; but none of these could they have done in any satisfying sense until they gave themselves up in the most unreserved manner. Then they could do all these things through Christ who strengthened them. Then, true confession led on to real absolution, and absolution to peace. Then, the altar shone with the light of other worlds, and other worlds became attractive as never before. Then, prayer was all praise, and praise all prayer. Then, the Saviour's cross became more beautiful than all the beauties of nature. Then, work was transformed from labor to worship, and trouble became a veritable source of happiness.

## CHAPTER IX.

### The Way of Purgation.

SELF-OBLATION NOT A PASSIVE SURRENDER—THREE STAGES OF GROWTH—PROGRESS IS SLOW—THE SIN OF IMPATIENCE.

THE habitual abandonment of the soul to the keeping of God in the way of oblation is not a state of passive surrender in which responsibility ceases. Self, though renounced, is not yet subjugated. We have much to do co-operatively, although God does all efficaciously. “It is of us to cleanse the vessel; it is of God to fill it.” There will never be a period in our development as disciples of Christ, when we shall pass beyond the necessity of personal effort and conflict, but the battle is naturally fiercest in its earlier stages. “The path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” The shadows of night must be assailed, the trailing clouds of vapor at dawn must be put to flight,

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and great armies of clouds must be vanquished before the sun has full sway in his empire of light.

Those who know much of the ways of God in the soul speak of stages of growth. A beautiful analysis of this progressive movement was made by the late reverend Mother of the Community of S. John Baptist ("Clewer Sisters"):

"All spiritual life," she wrote, "is a growth through different stages.

"First—The conquest of actual sin such as we must and ought to struggle against.

"Second—Then the gradual rising beyond the struggle into a state where the soul seems growing and deepening on all sides, and the inward consciousness is increasing so that the immortal within can find no rest till it has found its repose in God; and this is a time of long and slow and gradual growth,—great worlds to travel in here. There is a distinct consciousness that we mean to be on God's side, we mean to give Him our heart. This is a time when oftentimes the only appearance of progress we have is the longing not to fall back; and then something comes and opens a long vista before us, and we see the way to walk in, and live more in the sunshine of God's presence.

"And then, third, comes that wondrous state of Divine love and union when the soul is fixed steadfastly in regions above earth, and comes down to touch earth only in ministries of love, and with a will wholly one with the Divine Will,—a life of

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beatitude when all has been offered up, and we are wholly one with God,—that life which our Lord speaks of (S. John xiv. 23). But we must plod a bit yet ere we reach this, though it helps us to catch glimpses of it, and makes us feel at times we could give up all to attain to it.”\*

But the process by which Martha may become a Mary can be indicated only in outline, for the reason that, as there are diversities of disposition and experience, there must be diversity in the methods by which God effects transformations so great. Many are the highways that lead to Emmanuel’s Land, and one pilgrim may reach it by a path which would be impracticable to another. There are however characteristic features common to all; and of these there is one without which the

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\* “Sanctification is a work both human and divine. It is divine through its immediate principle, the Holy Spirit; through its meritorious cause, the Incarnation and the death of the Son of God; through its end, the happiness of the Holy Trinity, in which holy souls are to participate for all eternity; finally, through its chief means, the teachings and the graces of Jesus Christ transmitted to men through the Church.

“But this work is *human* also, since the graces of the Holy Spirit, the merits of the Son of God, the design of the Holy Trinity, and all the efforts of Providence, can bear fruit in a soul only as far as she freely co-operates with them.

“This co-operation in our sanctification which God requires of us is composed of three parts.

“It consists first of all in the destruction of everything in our corrupt nature which is an obstacle to the divine action: sins, vices, sensible inclinations, defects, imperfections. This first labor is what the masters of the spiritual life call the *purgative way*. It is accomplished by examinations of conscience, works of penance and mortification, and the various practices in use in the Church.

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first step could not be taken nor any progress made, namely, "the conquest of actual sin such as we must and ought to struggle against," which is sometimes called *the way of purgation*.

And let it be noted here, that, whatever heights of sanctity may be scaled, there will never arrive a period in this life in which the necessity for purgation shall cease. There are states of experience in which the soul is swallowed up in God, states approximate to positive perfection, high planes of holy living attained by souls who have died to everything but God; but for them even the pains of purgation are not wholly removed. Christian perfection, at its noblest and best, is no more than the noblest and best aim at absolute perfection hereafter.

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"The second part of the labor which God imposes on the soul desirous to attain sanctity is less painful, and easier. It is what is called the *illuminative way*. The soul that God introduces therein exercises herself in producing the interior acts of virtue with which grace inspires her, and in practising the good works to which this same grace impels her.

"Finally, when the obstacles are removed and the soul's preparation is completed, God unites Himself to her, fills her with His grace, inflames her with His love, and uses her as the docile instrument for the accomplishment of His designs: this is the *unitive way*.

"But let us not misapprehend this condition. Even in this perfect state, in which God is fully master of His reasonable creature, He does not act in her without her co-operation; He requires of her great fidelity in avoiding the smallest faults, great vigilance over her affections, great generosity in denying herself in all things, great fervor in prayer. So far from dispensing her from the works of the illuminative way by which she prepared herself for the Divine Union, He causes her to accomplish them with greater perfection and merit."—  
H. RAMIÈRE.

## The Way of Purgation.

The way of purgation cannot be avoided. It is entirely practicable to keep step with the most active workers, to spend all one's strength in exterior service, and at the same time to be inwardly the slave of sin. This has been often illustrated in the annals of the Church, and sad enough are those exemplifications of hypocrisy. But it is impossible for an awakened Christian to devote his strength to interior activity without finding it necessary at once to grapple with his sins.

The new alliance of the soul is a passage out of the indefinite into the definite. By the great renunciation, the powers of the will have bound themselves to make it effective. The surrender to God implies, necessitates, obedience; and, in order to obey Him, we must cease to obey the renounced master at once. The consequent conflict is immediate.

The question hence becomes one of courage, honesty, and thoroughness.

Purgation, then, expresses the first need and duty of one who would wish to act according to the spirit of his self-surrender into the hands of God. Making one's self over to a Divine Keeper, we repeat it, is not a high-flown sentiment, but a deliberate act which includes and disposes to all its implications; and surely it can imply nothing less than the resolve to keep inviolate the commandments of God, or (which is the same thing),

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to purify one's self from the habits of sin, primarily those which do most easily beset us. The end in view being the formation within of a growing capacity for holiness, there must at once follow a calm, but intense, attack upon the long-existing and tyrannous capacity for worldliness, luke-warmness, and exteriority which has now been renounced.

The Martha type of Christian, resolutely determined to seek and secure the one thing needful, must not anticipate speedy results. Two armies stand face to face; a great battle is at hand; but the issue cannot be decided by a single action. When an enemy has fortified himself in the land, he is not to be speedily dislodged; and when evil ways, or half-hearted ways, have grown with a man's growth, and strengthened with his strength, they cannot be driven out at the first nod of his will. Long campaigns await the soul. There have been in the history of the Church some striking instances of rapid transformation; but the ordinary operation of grace is like the effect of the nearing sun upon a winter landscape; it is a far call from the melting of the snow to the mature foliage of the summer. The will long habituated to put the last first, and the first last, cannot acquire the reverse habit in a day. The art of unceasing prayer has to be learned, and habits of self-repression and silence secured. All the old life must be made over; the senses must be mortified; the

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motives revolutionized; the passions purified; the members freed from servitude to sin; every thought brought into subjection to Christ; constant communion with God cultivated, and thereby humility acquired,—it is indeed a great and lifelong work of purification.

We could commit no mistake more hazardous than to count the joys of surrender to be the joys of perfection. One cluster of grapes, and a few pomegranates and figs, from Eschol, do not make the Promised Land. But the slowly progressive movement is the assurance of final results. When God honors His hungry children with a little loaf, and a little taste of the water of life, it is a great mercy. He always gives more than they either desire or deserve, nor will He withhold His gifts so long as they co-operate with His grace; but they must not vex Him by impatience. They should neither begin too eagerly, nor expect too much. The soul which stumbles and falls, and rises only to stumble again, must avoid the temptation to exclaim: I have fallen again: it is of no use to try. Let him rather say: It is just like me to have fallen, but I will try again. The Saints are the sinners who kept on trying.

Grateful should we be if God gives even so much as the first rudiments of that knowledge of which, if we are finally to see Him face to face, we shall know all. The gift of a stammering tongue is the promise of nobler speech hereafter.

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And yet how impatient we are for results! Probably more hopes have been frustrated by impatience than by deliberate reversion to former ways. We need to mark how God leads us onward under the law of development by exercise. Slight, indeed, are the perceptions of spiritual possibility which the Marthas possess. Even those who strive to see with clearer vision often seem to see only "men as trees walking." But let them be thankful for what they see, nor endanger what they have by over-eagerness. They who hurry lose patience, and impatience begets pride, and pride causes complaint, as though God must forsooth govern Himself by our dictations. Many are the persons who have asked for a sudden and revolutionary change within; and were greatly discouraged when subsequent events indicated much remaining mischief in the senses and a world of self-love not yet exorcised. How different the case might have been had some wise voice counselled them not to lay down terms to God, nor to think about the heights of sanctity that might be sealed by them, but to go quietly on, fighting each day's battle by itself, and committing the soul to God's hands to be dealt with as He will, when He will, and by what means He will!

Those better guided souls, who seek and would retain right relations with God, are rejoiced to leave results in His hands. They cleave to what God has given them, and know that "he that hath,

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to him shall be given." They know whom they have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed unto Him. He is their All in all, and the best they can say for themselves is that they are the most unworthy of His children. Those to whom God gives spiritual growth are not conscious of holiness. The closer they are drawn to the Majesty and Splendor of His Being, the more base does sin appear, and the more clearly are revealed the almost forgotten sins of their past years. From the abyss of their nothingness, they praise Him for the grace they have merited not. They do not stop to measure the tokens of growth—not how near they have drawn to God, but how near God has drawn to them. And so their weakness passes on from strength to strength. The eye which at the beginning of earnest discipleship could bear but a single ray of light can now bear many; and thus God honors the uplifted vision more and more, until by the precision of well-trained eyes, and the expansion of their field of sight, the soul discovers God to be the only Good, the only Beauty, the only End and Reward.

## CHAPTER X.

### The Death-Struggle with Sin.

THE WAY OF PURGATION INVOLVES THE OVERTHROW OF SENSE DOMINATION—THE BESETTING SIN—OCCASIONS OF SIN TO BE AVOIDED—FIRST ASSAULTS REPELLED—VENIAL SINS DANGEROUS—SPIRITUAL PRIDE—CONTEMPLATION OF GOD'S GOODNESS.

OUR physical organs of vision were made to see physical objects, and they are competent to do no more. But we possess also a vision of the soul by which spiritual blessings are discerned. In man's original condition there was a well-balanced co-operation of the senses and the spirit; but now, sense vision is acute, alert, eager; and the soul's eye is dim and torpid. Our discernment of spiritual realities is, therefore, like the view we get of the figure of a friend on the other side of a door of opaque glass. Through it we can see only a blurred, unoutlined object. We could see our friend if the glass were transparent. But while sense vision terminates at the death of the body, the soul's sight is inher-

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ent and partakes of its immortality. In thinking of the future, it is a painful reflection that the senses, which are now so active and imperious, must cease to live; while the soul, be it never so sluggish, cannot die. Think of a soul bereft of its body and ushered into God's presence,—just a naked soul, stripped of that physical organism with which it had so long accompanied upon the earth; a naked soul suddenly translated into the realm of spirit; a soul having no other power of sight than that which it had long refused to cultivate, a soul naked and almost blind! Those who profess to believe in things not visible to the senses, and yet live as seeing only the visible, whose spiritual discernment is the merest glimmer, a mote in the eye, of which they are scarcely conscious, might wisely ask what plea their stripped souls will be able to put in when they find themselves in the presence of God; and they will be wise, too, if they prepare for that time, when only as spirits shall they exist. Their servitude to the senses must be broken, and they must break it. The soul's eye must be cultivated, an end to be secured only in the resolute conflicts to which they are pledged who have entered upon the way of purgation.

Those who desire and resolve to respond to the voice of God calling upon them to rise to higher levels of holy living, will not refuse these battles of purgation. It is a hard task to slap nature in the face, and always be saying to it: Thou shalt not

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have that which thou oughtest not. It is a double task when we must deny the senses in those things which are not in their essence wrong. It is a triple severity when we must learn to decline allowable things, simply for the wholesome discipline of the self-denial. The Christian of the day thinks too much about allowable comforts—the houses we live in, the clothes we wear, the food we eat—and we talk, look, hear, and labor too much. It was Martha's sad error to concede too much to things not in themselves sinful. O, what a hold this external world has on us! Everything in these days goes by sight and not by faith.

It is therefore necessary to clarify the senses, and only by discipline can this be done. Their sovereign control must be overthrown; for if we do not slay them, they will slay us. When they are weak, the soul's eye grows strong; when they are under control, we begin to taste somewhat of the sweet-ness of the eternal vision of God. As long as we are in the body pent, we must seek to spiritualize the senses by keeping them under; "for just as the body has power to materialize the soul, so the spirit is able through mortification to spiritualize the body." "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth."

Some helpful precautions are suggested to those who have entered upon the way of purgation.

1. They will find themselves face to face, and at sword's point, with a particular sin; one that has

## The Death-Struggle with Sin.

been aggressive and uncontrollable, and which is accurately described as “the sin that so easily besets us.” Why are its victories so easily won? Because it assails us at our weakest point, and because a strange fatuity possesses us to deal very indulgently with ourselves just at the point where we have need to be most uncompromising. We can confess other frailties with frankness; but this we conceal as though it were a friend to whom we had sworn that we would die rather than betray him. Intensely loyal to this darling fault, we find a thousand excuses for it, and willingly accept the deception whereby we make ourselves believe it to have a leaning to virtue’s side. Now, whatever may be its degree of turpitude, it involves us in the greatest risk; for if it be comparatively venial in itself it is sure, under our indulgent treatment, to develop into deadly virulence; and if it be worse than venial it has already done its fatal work; for there can be no spiritual life when the soul succumbs to mortal sin. Such a sin cuts off all connection with the source of grace.

It is necessary, then, that a Christian man shall honestly and fearlessly seek out his infirmity, so as to know where to apply the knife of excision and the scourge of discipline; and the more so because grave sins often conceal themselves in one who is, at every other point of character, exemplary. It is possible for a man to be reputably religious, even sincerely so up to a certain point, and yet be

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inwardly the veriest bond-slave to a passion or a vice which repudiates the authority of God, and answers His mercy with contempt. In such cases, the sin must be wrestled with, as a man near the brink of a precipice would grapple with a wild beast which had sprung upon him.

2. Sinful habits and infirmities are excited and aggravated by contact with that which occasions them. We circumvent nature when we defraud it of the occasions which would awaken the dormant propensity, and excite it to action. Thus, for example, he who would cure himself of sins of speech will attain his purpose by silence. Many a victory has been gained over sensual instincts by stern control of the eyes. The Nazarites, who might drink no wine, were forbidden to take part in the gathering in of the grapes. Why should you put your faith in peril (the faith that is the most powerful influence for good that has moulded your life) by reading infidel arguments, whose fallacies you are unfitted by education or ability to detect? Then, again, as we are largely the creation of our companionships, we should remember that "a friend of fools shall become like unto them." If we put the hand of a rigid constraint upon our associations and surroundings, it will be easier to train the will in habits of new obedience.

3. It is a great help to doggedly repel the first assaults of sin. It is easier to keep the enemy out than to expel him when he has gained entrance.

## The Death=Struggle with Sin.

With the weight of a finger one can stay a rock poised on a mountain's top; but what finite power could control its momentum should it once begin to roll downward? We have learned a great lesson when we have trained our wills to resist the first access of temptation. But there are certain sins, generally those of the flesh, whose attacks it is unwise to confront and seek to face down. There is no safety but in prompt flight; to parley is unsafe; to withstand is to increase the chances of surrender. Flee! Flee, as if a loathsome leper were seeking to embrace you in his arms.

4. Those who are fighting their way through the valley of purgation may be so absorbed in the strife with their worst enemies, their giant sins, as to make little account of their lesser foes. Some sins are more aggravated than others. One mortal sin wilfully done in cold blood stabs the baptismal life to the heart, and all spiritual vitality flows from the cruel wound. Venial sins strike not such fatal blows; but there is this to be remembered—they dispose the soul to graver offences. Carelessness about little faults of thought, word, and deed is very unwise and dangerous; but, if we are vigilant to repress our infirmities and peccadilloes, we shall acquire strength for the more serious encounters of the soul. If it be true that no aspiring soul can attain the higher spiritual levels save by long processes of growth, it is equally true that no one sinks to the lowest abyss of sinfulness in a day.

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If we are faithful in a little, we shall be faithful in much. To be invincible in the great battles we must learn to conquer in the skirmishes.

5. One of the most difficult forms of sin to overcome is pride, and it is among the last to succumb. He who thinks he has none does not know what it is. For every struggle with sensual sin, he will have ten with self-conceit. Self-love is ever burning to make something out of nothing, forgetful that whatever we have was given us. Humility is the virtue which follows from a true estimate of our value. What is my valuation as a Christian, in the sight of God, He measuring me as I am, by the standard of His law? He who is omniscient and does not forget! He who has intuitive and infallible knowledge of me! When we consider what He is, and, then, what we are, in the scale of being, in the scale of power—as for example in the realm of astronomical immensity—“what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” When we consider our distance from Him, in the scale of moral being, we perceive that at his best estate man could have been no more than a finite reflection of His infinite holiness. But when we contemplate our condition as fallen intelligences, we clearly discover that we have destroyed the very unit of measurement by which a sinless creature could be compared with Him. There is no difficulty thus far. Intellectual humility is the inevitable result of recognition of a Supreme Being.

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But when we attempt to convince ourselves of our *spiritual nothingness* before God, and to bring our thoughts and lives into practical and consistent conformity with this conviction, we encounter the most difficult task of the Christian life. And yet humility is the only attitude which the facts justify. When one considers what he has been in all his past years in his relation to his God, he finds no ground for self-laudation; on the contrary, he should shrink with horror from the accusations of memory. He ought further to consider what he might have been if he had lived up to his opportunities, and responded as he ought to the influences with which God ever sought to win him away from the devices and desires of his own heart. Well may he deplore the present surviving effect upon him of that past, so full of folly and sin and self-sufficiency; and well may he exclaim with Job: "Thou writest bitter things against me, thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." When he considers further the humiliating fact that he has nothing that he has not received, and that one of the signal blessings with which God favors him is the grace of restraint, whereby all the possibilities of sin (which still lurk in the recesses of his soul) are repressed, and that if God's loving power were lifted for an hour he would drop to the old level of sinfulness, what right or reason has pride to retain its place in his heart any longer?

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No right; no reason. But the usurpation has a cause. The basic fact of our estate as fallen men is that each man is, in a sense, his own god. We are self-centered, we are enslaved to self-love, we habitually form false estimates of our value; and even when we have been brought under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, it is easier to practise faith, love, gratitude, and consecration, than humility. Humility is, O, so long in coming, and so hard to keep; and when pride sometimes appears to relax its horrible octopus grip on the soul, it straightway proceeds to take a firmer grasp with its deadly tentaculæ. The one sole force stronger than pride is perseverance. He who has turned his face like a flint towards humility, which is the foundation of all the virtues,\* must never turn back. “Wheresoever thou findest thyself, renounce thyself.” (Thomas à Kempis). There is no gift God so loves to bestow as spiritual humility, and none so difficult to accept; but the difficulty diminishes in proportion as we make ourselves over more and more into the loving custody of God, in whose presence the lofty valua-

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\*“Prayer is the self-abasement of man, who acknowledges his profound misery and the infinite greatness of Him whom he adores and prays to, expecting all from God, nothing from himself. Faith is the humility of human reason, renouncing its own thoughts, accepting with submission the thoughts of God, and the authority of His Church. Obedience is the humility of the will subjecting itself to another will. Chastity is the humility of the flesh, which becomes subject to the spirit. Exterior mortification is the humility of the senses. Penitence is the humility of all the passions which it immolates.” Love for God is the humility which owns that there is no basis for self-love.

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tion we have put upon ourselves becomes petty and contemptible. It is by habitually abiding at His feet that we are impressed and overwhelmed with the exceeding sinfulness of pride. It is by following in the blessed steps of our Saviour that we learn the very great beauty and value of humility; for every step of His incarnate progress, from His conception to His ascension, is described in the words, "He humbled Himself."

The persevering practice of meekness and lowliness of heart, not thinking more highly of one's self than one ought, in honor preferring others to one's self, will after awhile develop into the supernatural grace of the love of humility. This is the triumph of truth; for humility consists in seeing things as they are. When pride is so far conquered as to make room for a sincere recognition of one's true value before God; and when the soul pays the homage to truth of being willing and glad to pass in the estimate of others for just the value which it has in God's sight; and when one feels that he who deserves his own contempt deserves also that of his fellow men, true humility has set up its quiet reign in the heart, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding has entered that soul.

6. An earnest soul, struggling to purge itself from sins, will welcome the results of the experience of others who have found the greatest possible help, and strength, and stimulus, by devoutly contemplating the goodness of God. Nothing so

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excites to repentance. Nothing throws so much light on the meanness and malignity of sin. God is essential goodness; He is good essentially, and good communicatively. There is that in Him which makes Him happy in Himself, and happy in making others happy. He cannot but have an interest in His creatures, and help them lead a holy and happy life; and all that He does for them ought to have that effect. If we are unhappy or in trouble, others (probably ourselves) have been trying to regulate things.

## CHAPTER XI.

### The Practice of Self-Scrutiny.

ELEVEN WORDS OF COUNSEL FOR THOSE WHO WOULD KNOW  
THEMSELVES.

**A**LL Martha-like Christians need to find themselves out. Painful though the duty may be, it will prove most salutary to those who long for a nobler life, and are resolved to gain it, if they acquire the art of habitual self-examination. When we lie down at night our minds almost spontaneously make a survey of the day that has passed ; and we are quite certain to recall the events that have displeased us, and the words that have hurt our pride. If anyone has spoken us harshly, or crossed our path, or inflicted injury upon us, we live it all over again in painful retrospection, and renew the pain we felt before. But why should we stop at this ? Have we not erred and strayed from God's way like lost sheep ? Have we not wilfully pre-

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ferred the devices and desires of our own hearts? Have we not pierced some soul with an unkind word? Have we not surrendered to some unholy passion? Let us turn the searchlight of God's law upon our consciences to see if there be any evil way in us.

1. No Christian man can safely neglect this duty. If we judge ourselves we shall not be judged; if we condemn ourselves we shall not be condemned. He who practises daily examination in the presence of God will never lose his soul through impenitence. Let him rehearse the Commandments, one by one, and ask whether he has kept this law; or, let him compare his life through the day with the Lord's Prayer; or, let him measure himself by his threefold baptismal vow, Renunciation, Faith, Obedience; or, let him take the Beatitudes for a test of his soul; or, let him carefully go over the Seven Mortal Sins, pride, covetousness, luxury or lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth; or, let him read the words of the Lord Jesus and compare himself with His immaculate life.

2. Unless the scrutiny is careless and superficial, he will avoid the folly of a general conclusion that he has left undone those things which he ought to have done, and done those things which he ought not to have done. What things? Particularize! Get at the concrete facts, and give not self-righteousness the benefit of a doubt. You are not likely to put too much shadow in the picture. As no chain

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is stronger than its weakest link, we must seek the latter out. Some particular sin has a predominant power over us; in one it is an uncontrolled appetite, in another a wretched temper, a sensitive self-love, a mania for acquisition, a censorious tongue or a cowardly fear of men. Faithful self-examination will soon reveal to each one his weakest point; and will at the same time show him that this cannot be separated from other faults, since it will be found to be the occasion of almost every sin which he commits. It will be comparatively easy to overcome them when he has conquered this. If the head of Goliath is cut off, the other Philistines may be routed.

3. Self-scrutiny should not be confined to outward acts. These are only the outcome of inward states of sin; we do what we are. Sin is not an abstract term. Sin is I, sinning. Sin is I, with my hard inward indisposition towards God constantly expressed in my actions, and exceptionally active when I am trying to live unto God. But there are possibilities within us which we have never carried into deeds or words. What manner of men would we be had we always acted our thoughts? The revealing light of the law must be turned upon our spiritual motives and states, and upon all the defects of our relation to God. It were idle to spend time in cutting down weeds unless we go down to the roots to extirpate them; and this, not only that they may be destroyed, but that oppor-

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tunity may be afforded the seeds, flowers, and fruits of a better life to grow in their place. Our duty is like that which the Lord put upon Jeremiah: "See, I have this day set thee \* \* \* \* to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant."

4. We must consider the frequency of omission or commission, as well as the circumstances of time or place which may have aggravated a given sin.

5. It is further necessary to inquire whether we have shared in the sins of others, or encouraged others to sin.

6. And all self-examination must be thorough and radical. Superficiality is neither manly nor effective. Intimate knowledge of one's self is the only knowledge worthy of the name; for it is only by this process of spiritual *reconnoissance* that the soul learns where it is weak, and where to apply the instruments of assault and conquest. One of the greatest difficulties is to be assured that our self-scrutiny is honest, simple and ingenuous. This is due to the duplicity of the heart—the extent of which no man can or will believe until experience convinces him; and the misery of it all is that the very heart which sincerely desires to know the worst, will often catch itself trying to put the best construction on its acts and states. But the earnest soul, hungering to live nearer to God, will welcome any test, no matter how heroic it may be.

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It were better to be consciously filled with self than to think without truth that we are empty. Am I really at sword's point with myself because of my spiritual sloth, the weak grasp of my faith upon God, my facility of yielding to sin? Do I in reality despise myself? Do I despise myself, not only for positive acts which are sinful, but for the aversion of my will from God which is the inward cause of these acts?

O, my soul, when thou seest that another entertains a dislike for thee, does it arouse resentment, or, dost thou say, it is only my due?

O, my soul, when thy good is evil spoken of, when thy motives are impugned, when thy peculiarities are ridiculed, when thy service is depreciated, when thy kindness is answered by thanklessness, art thou more deeply wounded than when thou makest confession to thy God of all the evil that thy good is mixed with, and of all the self-love which taints that which thou callest thy good?

O, my soul, dost thou really despise thyself, if thou canst not bear that others shall despise thee? Can that be true humility in the presence of God which is pride in the presence of man?

It is said of a master in the spiritual life that when he wished to test the interior state of another he simply tested his humility, offering the person in question some mark of contempt. If he found him proof against this touchstone, he at once inferred that the Spirit of God was there. Is it

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necessary that another shall exercise this discipline upon us? Why shall we not be our own tormentors? If we do indeed hunger to make advances towards spiritual union with God, we will set our faces like a flint against high estimates of ourselves, and squarely test our humility. Apply some simple proof, and note the result. We shall thus find ourselves out, and shall learn that "self-knowledge and self-contempt are inseparables."

7. Moreover, this duty of self-scrutiny must be discharged in the very presence of the All-Seeing Eye, and with prayer that He may send the Holy Ghost to convince us of sin; for the Father of Spirits is concerned for His children that they be not self-deceived. Grace is illuminative, and reveals to us what we are, provided we seek to know in all the lowliness of a soul that wants to know the worst. Our Divine Lord has the deepest sympathy with us; for was He not tempted like as we are, yet without sin, as we are not? He put His unsullied humanity into the very vortex of the world; He wept every tear we can weep but the tear of repentance; He knows that we are but dust; and hence He is intensely sympathetic when we would discover what manner of men we are.

8. Self-examination should be a daily duty, and at a time, either morning, or evening, or both, when other things do not press upon us. Deliberation is essential to so judicial a task, and this requires the mind to be free from distraction. Less time will be

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required when all the time is continuously occupied. Five minutes of concentration are better than an hour of inattention and wandering.

9. But this duty is one that covers a wider territory than the day that is just ended. What we are is the product of what we have been; nor can we fully know our present selves unless we examine ourselves historically. That weary cry of almost despair when you come to see how slight your progress, how unsubdued your besetting sin, how immeasurable the distance between the stormy seas where you are tossing, and the haven of peace where you would be—that weary cry is but the echo of other years, the sad minor tone of the sinful long ago. We could all be saints but for the former iniquities. Had we fought the battles of purgation then, our present conflict would not now be so severe. The sting of guilt, or exposure to endless penalties, may have been taken from us by the pierced hand of the Lord, and it cost Him His life to do it; but He did not obliterate the old sins from our memory, nor their influence from our present life. That hard, stony preference in the breast for our way, our wish, our interests, our views, our wisdom, our comfort, our position, is just the hard, stony preference that we cherished in youth, only grown harder, stonier, by long indulgence, and by palliative treatment when the surgeon's knife was what the case demanded. That past is telling on this present. To judge what we

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are, we must remember what we have been. Remember what we were when we were least willing to be good, and most bound in the chains of sinful habit; and then let memory remind us, "Thou art the man." God's providence may have disciplined and His grace delivered us; He may have wrought great changes since those sad years; but strike out all that He has done within us, and what remainder is there save that same hard, stony heart, and that wretched capacity of preferring everything to God?

10. In these processes of self-scrutiny we are in danger if we lose sight of their purpose, which is not so much to determine infallibly what we are, as to ascertain what we have done, or left undone. Only Omniscience knows and can know us truly. God has not promised to show us this knowledge, nor is there any evidence that He does so; for the men who, in the estimation of the Church, are the very flower of her sainthood, do uniformly characterize themselves in terms which are relieved from the suspicion of unreality only by the conviction we have, that the nearer they approach the ineffable purity of God, the more base and inexcusable do their sins appear to be. S. Augustine was weeping over the sins of his youth when he died. How much more eloquent of his sanctity those tears, than would have been a recital of his graces! The only conscious saint recorded in scripture was one who prayed, "God, I thank Thee that I am not

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as other men." Beware of analyzing yourself; be content to scrutinize, which is really all that you have the power to do, except that you may cast yourself, with every sin which scrutiny has revealed, at the feet of God. And this is all that He asks of us; He is content with little because He knows we have not much to give.

11. The influence of God is so mysteriously braided into the lives of His children, and made a part of them, that it is not possible to distinguish the Divine and the human working; but we may rest assured that when we abandon ourselves to His keeping, He is the inspiring source of the dissatisfaction we shall then feel when we scrutinize our spiritual condition. His is the most active agency in the unfolding history of our souls. Your dissatisfactions are painful; but study them well, and you will discover that they are the whisper of a still, small voice. "Just as men that would see the stars at noonday look not into the heavens above them, but down into some deep, dark well, gaze with fixed eye down into the depths of that spirit of yours where God's Spirit abides; and though at first you may see nothing but its own cold water, look and ever look, and you will see at last, glimmering and shimmering beneath its surface, tremulous light points, the shadows of the stars." So you have only to study your soul's sins and sorrows closely to see how much God has to do with your life. The heart-brokenness which

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comes upon you when you see what you are, and what you might have been—study it long, and you will see in it the shadow of the stars. Those disappointments which came when you tried to satisfy your conscience with outward activities—study them with fixed gaze, and they will show you the shadow of the stars. Those painful struggles whereby you have striven to burst away from your meaner self, struggles that have wrenched the very fiber of your being—gaze long upon them, and you will see in them also the shadow of the stars.

## CHAPTER XII.

**"I will Arise and go to My Father."**

THE ELEMENTS OF REPENTANCE—ITS SEAT IN THE WILL,  
NOT IN THE FEELINGS—THE SIMPLICITY OF A SINCERE  
REPENTANCE.

THE Christian who has resolved to rise to a higher plane of life cannot rest in the discoveries which attend self-scrutiny; his heart will melt into penitence. As there can be no repentance without knowledge of sin, there can be no spiritual progress without repentance.

Repentance is a complex act. The awakened disciple perceives his condition, his departure from inner contact with God, his servitude to self, his pride, his ingratitude; and is penetrated with sorrow that he could have been so weak as to rest in the service of God rather than in God Himself. He contemplates with dismay the fact that his sin has been the defiance of Infinite Majesty and Power;

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he dwells with weeping heart upon the grief with which God must regard his reversal of the established order and precedence of duties, and he asks himself: If God form His opinion of me from my preferences, which are the repudiation of His first and great commandment, where shall I find myself when He comes for righteous judgment? What a perilous condition am I in, with death not far away, and the things that come after death! And this folly of mine has been the response of my base ingratitude to the goodness which has heaped blessings on my head; by such mockery of love has the child answered back the Father who has carried me in His arms, breathed His spirit into my heart, and illustrated in my case the divineness of His invincible patience!

When the sense of sin and sorrow for it are real, the soul, vacillating between fear and hope, finds its way to the feet of God to pour out its confession. There is no difficulty about confession when the soul is humiliated by a true and deep contrition. "I acknowledge my faults and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." Repentance is not worthy of the name without confession; for he who comes to the knowledge of sins only to conceal them, augments their turpitude. It is necessary that Christian people should take heed to this, because so great has been the prejudice against confession to God in the presence of one of His commissioned

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embassadors, that the idea of confession as of the very essence and texture of an honest repentance, has been lost to view; and a sense of regret or sorrow, more often superficial than profound, has come to be regarded as sufficient; whereas such a repentance needeth to be repented of; it can only displease God, and bring leanness to the soul. The conditions of Divine forgiveness are fixed and immutable. There can be no pardon by the Cross without repentance, and there is no repentance without confession. Moreover, confession, like self-examination, must be particular; it should specify the sins and the occasions of them, their numbers and aggravations; and guilty is he who wilfully refrains from uncovering all his burden to God's eye, humiliating though it may be to do it. Humiliation will not deter him who has a real sense of sin; on the contrary, such an one cannot choose but prostrate himself in abjection before God; indeed, there will be a joy in doing it which will brighten the gloom of his soul. A real penitent seeks humiliation, and hastens to make bare his soul to God! If he is in the presence of God's priest, that can add very little to it. Our Lord Jesus Christ has given holy opportunities in His Church, and has clothed His embassadors with delegated powers of absolution, as He has authorized them also to baptize and confirm and celebrate the Holy Communion in His Name; and those who make use of the full privileges of the Church, testify

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to the larger blessings and richer graces which they thereby secure. It remains true, however, for all, whether they "open their grief" according to the mind of the Church or not, that the penitent soul must make a clean breast to God as the evidence of its honest sorrow for half-hearted discipleship.

But there are other elements of a true repentance. Our Divine Saviour has made a full, perfect and sufficient satisfaction for sin, in the sense that He has lifted from us our liability to eternal pain, and placed us in the way of being saved; but as His death doth not exempt us from death, His satisfaction works not our discharge from the immediate consequences of our sins, but rather supplies to our pardoned souls the privilege of making some loving reparation for the sins wherewith we have made Him to mourn. There are satisfactions which, through the merit of the Cross, we should render to God, and which in loving penitence we should hasten to offer as the tokens of our gratitude. What are they? what return shall we make for God's absolving love? what pronounced evidence shall we offer of the sincerity of our repentance? The nature of these thankful returns is represented by many acts, such as self-denial, self-repression, and self-abandonment to God at any cost. Their number cannot be reckoned. Penitent love, soothed to peace by His pardon, will find a thousand ways of proving itself; but all these will

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be found to fall under three generic classes, namely : alms, fasting, and prayer.

Fasting stands for all forms of cross-bearing, all acts of discipline, and all mortifications of the flesh and the fleshly soul.

Alms represent all good works, whether spiritual or temporal.

Prayer includes all those states of the soul which own the supremacy of the Divine will, and the affluence of the Divine benignity, and which aspire to union with God as the acme of spiritual progress.

As sin is an injury done to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, we honor God by prayer, we make reparation to our neighbor by alms, and we humble ourselves by fasting.

That these are necessary elements of real repentance is evident. We cannot conceive how the publican could have refused to cry : "God be merciful to me a sinner;" or how she who ministered so lavishly to the Person of her Lord could have loved little when she had been forgiven so much ; or how S. Paul could have spared his body, knowing that if he crucified not the flesh, the flesh would crucify him.

Two words of caution are here suggested :

1. As no evangelical virtue touches the fountains of emotion more quickly than repentance, it is important to distinguish between the action of the will, and the activity of the feelings. Repent-

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ance has its seat in the will which freely acts by choice, and conformably to reasonable motives. It is a change of moral direction, a reversal of the controlling principle of life. The validity of repentance has no reference whatever to the emotions, nor are these any criterion of our relations with God. Wisely saith Bishop Jeremy Taylor: "The expression of this sorrow [for sin] differs according to the temper of the body, the sex, the age, and circumstance of action, and the motive of sorrow, and by many accidental tender-nesses or masculine hardnesses; and the repen-tance is not to be estimated by the tears but by the grief; and the grief is to be valued, not by the sensitive trouble, but by the cordial hatred of the sin, and ready actual dereliction of it, and a resolu-tion, and real resisting its consequent temptations. Some people can shed tears for nothing, some for anything; but the proper and true effects of a godly sorrow are, fear of the Divine judgments, apprehension of God's displeasure, watchings and strivings against sin, patiently enduring the cross of sorrow (which God sends as their punishment), in accusation of ourselves, in perpetually begging pardon, in mean and base opinions of ourselves, and in all the natural productions from these, according to our temper and constitution."

2. All interior activity of the spirit must be characterized by simplicity; and this is particularly true of a sincere repentance. We should fall down

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before God with weepings of the will (let the emotions be what they may), and with the naturalness of children who are sorry that they have done wrong. There are doubtless many Christian people overmuch inclined to the conventional standard of attainment in spiritual living, who esteem the higher levels as fanciful and affected, limited to a certain type of sentimental, but not overforcible, people; and they prefer not to attempt to climb Zion's hill on stilts. But they ought to consider that the high-flying people whom they have in mind, and whom we have all met, caricature rather than represent the closer approaches of the soul to God. There is nothing romantic in a child of God trying to be good. Some one has said: "to pray well, nothing is required but the simple heart of an old woman." The King of kings must be reverenced and adored; but the children of a King may rest upon the King's bosom. Nothing pleases the King more than the simplicity and artlessness of His children. He would have us come to Him with singleness of heart, resting the burden of all our being on His most sure Word, trusting the matter of our progress to Him without embarrassment, without a doubt or fear, nay, rather with a calm assurance upon which we could stake our lives.

Holy men, who have traversed this path, teach us that if we would make a good repentance we must be as children. A simple heart will do the

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one thing that ought to be done. Martha made a sad revelation of what she had been, for a life-time perhaps, when she was so careful and troubled about many things; when her distracted will failed to rest strongly in that one thing needful which her childlike sister had chosen. This is very necessary to be considered; for most people live under conditions which fiercely tempt them to spend themselves in many directions, and these temptations usually assault them with rare success. How many separate interests appeal to them, and how their time and strength is frittered away upon them! Besides their legitimate vocation, there are all the social duties, the lectures to hear and the books to be read, the visits to be made, the dinners to eat, the excursions, the concerts, the plays; until life becomes an intoxication, a whirl, with no predominant end or aim standing out in relief. Thus the precious bloom of a simple heart is shaken to the earth by the turbulence of an aimless life. The prevalent degeneration of strong individuality is due to the squandering of force on such a variety of interests, unfitting people for real earnestness in any one direction. As the mode now dictates, they must dabble in every new theory, chase every fresh sensation, skim the surface of every brand new philosophy, run after every latest demi-god, and thus make themselves abject slaves of the transitory, morally invertebrate, intellectually of the standard of the trashy

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novel. The inevitable result is that character is all surface. There is a bright glow of clothes and diamonds, and a chatter of gossip; but no depth, no reality, no earnest appreciation of what it is to live a true human life in this world.

The same general conditions which generate this uninteresting mediocrity operate to the disadvantage of spiritual earnestness and development. Men and women, who fall short of a predominant aim because they have so many aims, must fail to meet the claims of God on their primary allegiance. Like Martha, they are blind to the one thing needful, by reason of the number of steaming pots they have on the fire. It is said that people neglect religion because they have lost faith; but why have they lost faith? It is because they have lost simplicity of character, and that unartificial genuineness which is the fruit of it. They have lost freshness and naturalness of action. They spread themselves out over the whole world, and then declare that life is not worth living. Of course, they lose faith in anything when they dissipate all earnestness by living for nothing in particular, and everything in general. What they need is to get away from the roar and rush of things, and think in the simplest and most childlike manner about the eternal questions; get away from the attractions of external activity, which is often only a baptized form of worldly zeal; and then will God come back to them as the One End and Aim of life, and

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the old lesson, newly learned, will be as sweet to them as it was long years ago, when they learned it from now silent lips. O, that they may draw away from the crowd and the racket, and be alone, silent and alone with God, to ask, why am I in this world? for what did God make me? what is my first duty? what ought to be the predominating aim of my life? what one thing should I do? The answers that come in that silence make no mention of many of the things that take up so much of their time, thought, and strength; but a Voice says: I have made thee for Myself, and thou shalt never find rest till thou find it in Me. It is the voice of One who has the right of proprietorship in them, and who has fixed their end. With condescending love He has bidden them to live for Him. Although they may, unhappily, have exchanged penitent devotion for inward indifference, He has changed not. Their end is still the same, and still He wills to be their end. They who come repenting back to God, come back to their better selves. They pass out of the delirium of an aimless life into the calm sanity of a determination to live for God alone. They have come to themselves; doubts vanish as clouds of mist roll away before the shining of the morning sun; all the faculties begin to work in harmony, each answering back to the others in perfect tone, and all combining to uplift that inner *Te Deum* which God loves to hear above the bursts of organs, and the

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anthems of countless choristers. It is the silent heart-song of manhood striking chord with the eternal purpose of Him who made us for Himself. God, who is an earnest God, again takes up His abode in the earnest soul, which, in all the simplicity of a child, opens its doors with repentant tears and songs of joy to the Father's entrance.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### The Ornament of a Quiet Spirit.

THE NECESSITY OF SOLITUDE AND SILENCE—WE MUST SEEK  
GOD WHERE WE ARE—EVILS OF UNRESTRAINED SPEECH—  
THE SERENITY OF GOD—A MEEK AND LOWLY HEART—  
THE PRACTICE OF RECOLLECTION—EXTRAVAGANT NOTIONS  
OF SANCTITY—THE GRACE OF CHARITY.

**T**IT is a change from artificiality to genuineness when humbled Marthas terminate the half-hearted discipleship which has stood to them for so much inward unrest, and to God for so much disappointment. The simplicity of action, which marks their repentance, begins to characterize them in all their relations as surrendered souls to their blessed and mighty Keeper. They have discovered how baffling to oneness of aim are the dissipations and distractions of a busy life, and how rigidly necessary retirement and silence are. Our Lord Himself was not exempt from this necessity; for

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how often do we read that He stole away to some quiet retreat where He might devote Himself without interruption to communion with the Father, in the unutterable tranquillity of pure prayer! We read also that when His apostles returned from one of their apostolical journeys, "and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught," He said unto them: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." And we know that His precept concerning prayer was: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."

Solitude and silence are indispensable; not only for their own sake, but because they are the occasion of needed victories over self. There is nothing in religion more difficult to acquire than strong love for secret prayer. Many a man could go into battle with less courage than he would require to bow down at God's feet alone, behind a shut door. Souls have won great victories in that way. Public services and outward activities were long the opiates by which they drugged their consciences; but when they found courage to hide themselves in the secret of His Presence, old things passed away, and all things became new.

Solitude and silence are necessary because we cannot serve two masters; we cannot live the life of

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Mary, and be always claiming our full share of the world's "hurly-burly." Over eagerness and too much talk dissipate childlikeness of spirit. Those who pray much are not great talkers. Retirement must be frequent and regular, that we may refresh our faith, renew our self-abandonment, and afford the Holy Spirit the opportunity of teaching us deep interior lessons. Every day should be in some sense a Quiet Day. Habitual communion with God is practicable in business, or society, or anywhere; but impracticable there without many a retreat to the tranquil mountain-sides of prayer and meditation, where, by much reverent intimacy with God, the spirit may acquire an inward peace which will neutralize the cares and perturbations of the world, and impart strength, dignity, gentleness, simplicity, and beauty to character. There is no lesson which needs to be so strongly reiterated, especially for Christians in our large and ever growing cities, where everything is unfriendly to that serene equipoise of the soul, that restrained sobriety of manner, that dulness of the senses to the distracting pleasures of the world, and to the equally distracting influence of external zeal and activity, which should mark him who is trying to serve God with all his heart.

And yet, God has commanded us to seek Him, as our primary obligation, in the very state of life where we find ourselves. There is no ideal spot which Satan cannot enter. The lad who was

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certain there was a better world beyond the blue mountains that bordered his native valley, must have been our brother; for we are all dreaming his dream. Were our circumstances different, it would not be so hard to be good! Were there not so many lions in the way, we might reach the Delectable Mountains! But, consider! the call of God is addressed to us in our present environment, so far as that does not merit the condemnation of His law. Unless so condemned, we may conclude that our place has been appointed unto us; and it is there that the call to "go up higher" reaches us. Doubtless, as we see it, it appears to be by no means favorable to the progress of the soul in holiness, but we may rest assured that His grace and His providence always co-operate in perfect harmony; so that in no other place in all the world, in no happy Arcadia which our imagination may be dreaming of, could we be so favorably situated for progress in the following of Christ. We would not choose so well, if we had the ordering of it; on the contrary, we would probably choose the very worst place. If we were to gain all the temporal good for which we now spend our best strength, if the aims which now keep us back from God should be crowned with success, and then our dreams of a better opportunity be realized, we might awake to find that we lost our opportunity long ago. It is wiser to live for God just where we are, and it is more pleasing to Him.

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"The colored sunsets and the starry heavens, the beautiful mountains and the shining seas, the fragrant woods and the painted flowers, they are not half so beautiful as a soul that is serving Jesus out of love in the wear and tear of common, unpoetic life" (Faber).

But whatever may be the state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us, the practice of silence, retirement, aloneness with Him, is indispensable. And this suggests that he who would lead a more positive Christian life will have to learn to control his tongue by silence; for the most effective way of conquering the inner propensity to say the things we ought not to say is to refuse speech to them. There will be many a hard fought battle before victory is in sight, and alas! we shall often lose the day just as we were on the point of winning it. Says the Psalmist: "I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle;" (think what strength and fitness to its purpose there is in a bridle!) keep it with such force of restraint that it cannot be used to utter the thoughts which demand expression. "I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle," he says, "while the ungodly are in sight," that is, even when he might have just cause to speak. Ungodliness should be warned and rebuked; but it is better to be silent even against the ungodly, if thereby I may be trained to control what is ungodly in myself. There are occasions when we may express adverse opinions

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of wrong-doers if the line of charity be not overpassed; but it is better to decline all speech than to break silence and charity at the same time.

The Psalmist was so set in his purpose to get the control of his tongue that he kept silence, as he tells us, "even from good words." "It was pain and grief" to him, he adds, but the discipline was wholesome. Self-denial in things allowable facilitates the practice of it in forbidden things. The Psalmist had a sore fight with himself. It was in his heart to say the things he ought not to say; they were all ready within him, waiting for expression; but his will stepped forward, and snatched away the instrument of expression. I want a voice! each wrong thought complained. But a voice you shall not have: you shall have nothing but silence; so do your best with that! It was a severe fight; no wonder his heart was hot within him, but he conquered; and behold! when he slackened the reins his tongue began to pray: "Lord, make me to know mine end and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am." The unruly member was conquered by silence, and the lips that were wont to talk harshly of the faults of others spake only of the time when they, themselves, would be silent in the grave. It was a great victory.

The soul which has surrendered to God, and rests quietly in Him, will acquire somewhat of His ineffable serenity. It learns to avoid impulsive

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action, and loves to move along the pathway of holiness with modesty, governed by a tranquil spirit, neither unduly uplifted by spiritual joys, nor depressed by trials. This moderation increases by exercise, the soul learning more and more to abandon itself to the keeping of God, until it becomes a habit and law of its life to prefer God's will to personal desire, and to banish its preferences, if they appear to conflict with that. There is less and less protest and resistance as the years go by, and more self-repression, quietness, serene immobility of spirit. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed!" All is peace, for God is managing the heart in His own way.

Humility is essentially the same grace under another name. We should suspect our motives when our actions do not promote humility. Much of the fashionable activity among Christians is scarcely disguised self-righteousness. But a just estimate of one's self restrains pride; and service done for God is meekly done, without desire to be seen of men, or to have part in all the hurry and bustle of a distracting world. The soul, weaned from its old conceit of itself and its doings, sees that it has nothing which it has not received; and that, were all that grace has done eliminated, the remainder would be a discreditable collapse. The only way in which it can complement God's grace is by adding its nothing to His all. Shrinking with terror from the penalties of self-love, it will not

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permit itself to be blown about by every blast of impulse or emotion, nor be affected by the praises or criticisms of others. It knows the former to be undeserved, and the latter to be its due. Ever striving not to be proud and self-willed, it could not possibly recognize the graces which render it so attractive to others, and yet it is conscious of a deep and satisfying repose in God, of less storm and more calm than once.

This gift of balance or moderation is promoted by the drawing in of all the faculties from external objects, and concentrating them on God present in the heart. This is *recollection*, that is, collecting or gathering in the thoughts of the mind, the attention of the will, and the devotion of the heart, in order to fix them on the one thing needful. When recollection becomes a habit of souls they can quietly rest in God in the busiest scenes of worldly activity; and if, under unusual conditions of excitement or perplexity, they are carried from their moorings, they no sooner become conscious of drifting than they make speed to cast anchor again in the depths of the Divine tranquillity. And they are less likely to lose a recollected spirit under such conditions if they have avoided the mistake of regarding loss of interest in everything as recollection. To love God it is not necessary to despise men. They simply prefer Him to them; and thus, by loving Him primarily, they learn to love them secondarily. In recollection, they are concerned to

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keep themselves in His hands, so that if called to enter the busiest scenes and engage in severest toils, they can do so without loss of spiritual equipoise or peace. He who calls them to a life of solitude, silence, and aloneness with Him in the inner sanctuary of the heart, may call them also to outward activities; sometimes to positions which involve continual distraction and worry, endless frictions and complaints and dissatisfactions. Taught of God, they will avoid any repugnance to the trying circumstances of their state in life, which, although in themselves annoying, are yet very closely related to the soul's progress; for if these circumstances are of God, if the Father has bid them go stand even where Satan's seat is, go work where hosts of devils are let loose, go suffer where persecution rages, what has a surrendered soul to do but to obey? But they must carry the quietude of the surrendered soul with them. Recollection is even more necessary in the whirl of the world than in the retirement of the closet; for in the world the temptation to impetuosity and self-regulated action is stronger. Recollection will help them to avoid unnecessary entanglement in affairs, and particularly in those which do not concern them. Should they suffer themselves to be pulled hither and thither by every turbulence of the hour, or to participate in all the details of events, restlessness will soon drive out the nestling peace of God, prayer will begin to be burden-

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some, and self-will will seek to regain its lost throne.

With reference to the development of the image of God in the spirit, those who have put themselves in His hands should exercise sobriety and humility in their expectations. If holiness consisted only in bodily austerities and sense-discipline, they might indulge in high-flown anticipations; for it is easier to starve the body to a shadow than to subjugate the will. No one has assurance of final victory. There are promises and engagements on the Divine side which are exceedingly great and precious; in contemplating which the soul often bursts into songs of joy, songs which might rise to the height of rapture did we not know the infirmities and vacillations of our wills. We are persuaded that God will keep us against that day; but we are not assured that we shall not become castaways at last, through our own fault, our own most grievous fault. The soul that would persevere must do so with fear and trembling. Let us not be guilty of presumption through excess of confidence. The best that we dare say is that we are in the way of being saved. Let us then rest quietly in God, saying, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Persons are sometimes tempted to indulge in religious extravagance and unreality by reading religious biographies, forgetful that these are usually eulogies instead of biographies. They tell

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of victories, but omit the long antecedent conflicts. Did they relate the whole story of infirmity, temptation, doubt, darkness, and relapse, the romance of sainthood would evaporate. The truth is that they who have set their faces towards the higher possibilities of the Christian life, are by that token neither grandees nor heroes. The best which they may claim for themselves is that they are as nothing before God. "We are His beggars," said S. Augustine. If they are holy, it is not their extraordinary zeal or devotedness, their fine talents or gifts, which make them holy; for these are in most cases natural qualities upon which grace acts. If they are holy, they are simply men of like passions with ourselves, having the same battles to fight, the same discouragements, the same helps, the same means of grace, the same Saviour, and the same opportunity to make God their All in all. If they differ from us, perhaps they think of holiness as something to work for by much plodding, by much grim commonplaceness of toil, and above all by much quietness of spirit in those silent and solitary places where only God is witness of the struggle. They do not indulge extravagant notions of sanctity, nor do they anticipate large attainments; for they know that "we must carry ourselves about with us until God carries us to heaven; and so long as we carry ourselves, we shall have nothing to boast of." They know that beneath vehement and over-anxious

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desires for good, there may be hidden much self-love and pride. And therefore they covet moderation, and just leave their subjugated wills in the hands of God, asking nothing save

“A love to lose their will in His,  
And by that loss be free.”

A quiet and restrained soul surrendered to God will acquire divine charity. Harshness and extravagance of expression with regard to the faults of others will begin to moderate. Charity cannot be blind to such very present realities, for charity has eyes; but charity is also calm and self-repressive, always ready to show compassion. Our neighbor has a trying temper, an ungenerous suspiciousness, a streak of duplicity, a real dislike for us, a fondness for meddling and making mischief, an ungoverned tongue, a selfishness that will sacrifice anybody for its own gain; but we are not his judge, as he is not ours. There is One who judgeth both. Our prayer should be, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Conscience tells us that we need strong curbs and severe lashings in this matter; for rash and uncharitable judgments, censorious speech, and extravagant prejudices cause a large part of the world's misery, and keep many Christians down at the lowest level of spiritual life. And what an example of the beauty and power of silence in the judgment of others is presented by our Lord; for

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“He bore with goodness and condescension the weaknesses, the ignorance, the jealousy, the ambitious contests of His apostles; He reproved with gentleness even those glaring faults in them, of which the malice of designing and wicked men might well have made use as so many arguments for blackening His own reputation; and He patiently waited for the slowly matured fruit of His constant instructions.” Thus He would teach us how to live with imperfection without losing charity towards it; how to bear incongenialities and misconstructions, suspicions, petty exhibitions of temper, and all the brood of similar discomforts, just as He would teach us how to bear poverty, sickness, bereavement, and temptations, namely, by accepting them as capable of conveying great blessings if rightly received. For there are large possibilities of good in the many opportunities which the faults of others afford us of repressing that self-love within, which, rather than the faults we see, really gives us the misery we feel. Charity suggests that the physician heal himself, and try to live in this world without being chafed and angered because those around also do ill; and without impatience because the world is evil, and signs of improvement sadly lacking. However detestable sin may be in the opinion of perfect Holiness, the patience and forbearance of God is something too wonderful to be described in terms of human speech; we can only fall down and adore it. He

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has this loving purpose in our surroundings with all their vexations and worries: that we shall learn to accept them with all serenity of soul, and answer back their assaults with forbearance and charity, with somewhat of that ineffable patience which He exhibits towards ourselves.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### Detachment and Indifference.

THE SPIRIT OF DETACHMENT—FOUR APPLICATIONS OF IT—A HIGH STANDARD INDISPENSABLE—INDIFFERENCE.

ENTIRE surrender to God, continuously repeated until the act becomes habitual, has been shown to be attended by definite spiritual results. The old fascinations of the world lose their glare and magnetism. The faculties are composed, simple, and recollected. The interior contacts of the soul with God produce the state of unceasing prayer; and the whole trend of life points to the happy consummation of the heart's dearest hopes in its perfect union with, and vision of, God. All this robs of its attractive power everything that is not God or not of God. The soul is weaned from all persons and objects, save as they are subordinated to God, and may be loved in Him. This state of the soul, not easily secured, not

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retained without infinite pains, is often spoken of under the name of "detachment."

Mary was a beautiful instance of a detached spirit. Martha was called to it. That devotion which had been in her eyes irksome, ill-timed, and sentimental, will yet become the one attraction as the one necessity of her life. The more she shall at length see how cumbering service is not her chief end, the more worthless and empty and self-willed her past activities will appear; while the taste of new joys, through nearer insight into the relation of Mary to unseen things, will be so sweet to her soul that she can only renew again and again the surrender of every power, every action, every thought, every throb of her heart, to God alone.

Detachment has two ends in view: 1. That we may live out the truth that God is our *first* necessity. 2. That we may bring into our daily life the practical fact that He is our *only* necessity. That is to say, nothing must be permitted to become or remain necessary to us in place of, or rather than, God. By the law of His Providence we may have all things as contingent. We may have father, mother, houses, lands, food, shelter, clothing, ourselves; we may have influence, fame, good repute; but these are God's secondary gifts. His first is Himself. He may sweep all these away; but what have we lost so long as this wonderful and all glorious God is left to us to be our All in all, now and forever?

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This law of detachment has a threefold application.

1. We must detach ourselves from all that is in itself sinful. Here the duty is absolute and uncompromising, as was before shown. We have no secondary right to do anything with things *per se* sinful, except to slay them. Sin is unmitigated devilism; and must be hated with an active abhorrence, and an heroic determination to accept death rather than compromise. “If thy right hand offend thee (*i. e.*, if thy will purpose to use the hand as the instrument of unrighteousness), cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.” Here detachment is accomplished by excision. Mortification, crucifixion, resistance unto blood, are the terms of triumph.

2. We must detach ourselves, as we said before, from all things which, while not in themselves sinful, do become the occasions of sin whenever we refuse to regard them as God’s secondary gifts, and become attached to them at the expense of the obligation of primary attachment to God. It is sad enough to see a soul lying vanquished at the feet of its sins; but it is more alarming when alienation from God is caused by that which is in itself good. In how many homes do the domestic affections eclipse the glories of love divine? See that faithful father growing gray in toilsome

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devotion to the temporal welfare of his family, while his heart is cold to God! See that priest spending himself in buildings and activities, and then standing a mere machine at the altar he has built! God and the angels are stricken with horror at these living lies. God will not brook a divided throne. Men cannot serve two masters. God is their primary, their only necessity. They cannot thirst for God and thirst for self at the same time. No matter what the world may say; no matter what low standards may be the reigning fashion, he who is truly detached willingly does violence to every usurping affection, every self-asserting interest; knows no price too great to pay, no pain too sharp to bear, no discipline too severe to encounter, just in order that he may restore to himself a willing preference for God over everything in heaven or on the earth, until, looking the dearest object of affection full in the face, weighing the most precious possessions at their full value, he is enabled to say to his God, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee."

3. But there is a vast range of possibilities in the way of detachment beyond this. Necessary to all Christians is this grace that God should be primary in the region of things not sinful; but God sometimes calls souls to walk in nobler paths of self-surrender. They will to do more than use God's gifts as not abusing them: they will not to

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use them. The attractions of surrender are to them greater than the fascinations of possession. The alternative of God and all these things added unto them, and God without these, being presented to their choice, they choose the loftier pathway. The Church is hungry for priests and laymen of this stamp.

4. But now I come to another application of this law of detachment. This higher attainment is not only an interior renunciation of outward things and conditions, but an interior dying to self. It is that utter detachment from self which leaves but one attachment remaining in the soul. It is the sure result of a soul's thirst for God, and more and more of God; persisted in with courage and high resolve; persisted in, in spite of the three-fold antagonism of the world, the flesh, and the devil; persisted in because the Holy Spirit nurses honest beginnings and pardons relapses; persisted in because God reveals Himself more and more to those who seek to lose themselves in the unimaginable Beauty of His nature, until at length the love of God is made perfect. No other love exists. The conflicts of years are crowned with the victory of faith. Self has come to be known as the worst of foes, more dangerous to the soul than any external enemy, and it has been hunted down like a ravening beast.

When God gives this spirit of utter detachment from self, when the soul comes boldly forth from

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its last hiding place and makes its final surrender to God, then He becomes its All in all. Cleaving to Him only, the soul desires nothing out of Him ; desires nothing but Him unless it be in Him. Then trials cease to be trials, being from God. God gives, not the annihilation of trouble, but the acquisition of a temper and habit of the soul that rises above it. He who reposes his confidence in the Everlasting Arms cannot be overcome by calamities that shake the world, still less by the petty vexations that corrode other men's hearts. "Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." His lot may be in a time and place where the foundations of things totter ; but he knows the secret of His presence whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Whatever storms beat and tempests howl, he can say: "My Father sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet." It is long in coming, this holy tranquillity; but it is sure to come to those who diligently seek it. The outward conditions of life are not changed, perhaps; but there is now a mysterious sweetness in all that was once bitter; the satisfaction of the soul in God is now so deep and pure that the electric flash and whirl of the world cannot banish Him from the fixed love of the heart. It can walk alone with God among the multitudes that surge through the avenues of the great city. And if in moments of sore distress or perplexity it is carried away from its moorings, the soul no

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sooner feels its drift than it takes measures to cast its anchor again in the unperturbed silences of the sea, where our strong Rock is.

Does this attainment seem to present too exacting an ideal? one that is to be exemplified only by those who are

“——too good  
For human nature's daily food?”

No doubt spiritual writers speak of detachment in terms that transcend the experience of many; but unless high standards are set before us, conscience will satisfy itself with standards too low. The General Confession in the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer is pitched in a very high key that we may not choose a lower, and that we may be uplifted to that. The writers referred to state duty in its most heroic sense when they bid us amputate our limbs till nothing but a bleeding trunk remains; but there is still no little surgery necessary for all of us. We must cut off every desire that is supreme and commanding if we would make God's will our law; while other attachments must be sternly relegated to their proper subordinate place. We need to be much in silence, and much alone with God: therefore we must often shut ourselves away from other engagements. We must love those who look to us for love, but no one too passionately. We must engage in deeds of mercy and kindness; but let “work” be dashed into a thousand pieces if it become an idol. There is no virtue like zeal for

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supplying self-righteousness with excuses for profaning the temple of God within us. "Take these things hence."

This spirit of detachment reveals to us how few are the things which are really necessary to us; induces a wise depreciation of those which are not necessary; and tends to great simplicity of life. It is not unjust to objects of desire or affection which have at best only a secondary claim upon us, to cultivate indifference towards them, at least to the extent of conserving our primary obligation of loyalty to God. If human love were as pure and true as it should be, no heart would begrudge the love which those dear to it might pour out at the feet of the Father. He who loves God, and others in God, illustrates the beauty of a perfect affection. And with God he has all things. He who has God can lose nothing. What vital inconvenience can any contingency cause him whose life is hid with Christ in God, and who has made Him his All in all? It is this spirit of possession which rewards the spirit of detachment with triumphant joy. He who loses his life finds it. What he surrenders he does not lose, but gains in addition unspeakable riches. The weaned soul dwells close by the throne, and learns to exclaim with S. Paul: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## CHAPTER XV.

### In the Crucible.

SELF-SURRENDER A *Via Dolorosa*—EXTERNAL AND SPIRITUAL TRIALS—CONDITIONS OF GROWTH—OUR LORD'S WAY OF THE CROSS—OUR EXAMPLE IN PAIN, WORRY, ARIDITY, DISCOURAGEMENT.

**H**E who seeks the union of his spirit with God, by self-surrender, has entered upon a *via dolorosa*.

In the first place, he will have to accept the trials that are common to man. Troubles will beset his path, sickness will befall him, calumny may overtake him, temporal disappointments may burst upon him, temptations will assail him.

In the second place, he must encounter the special trials peculiar to one who turns strongly to God. For it is hard to give up the former motives of life, and to revolutionize one's likes and dislikes. This passover must be eaten with bitter herbs. There will also be severe interior trials,

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caused by relapses, by murmurings, by falterings of faith, by the loss of fervor, by the rebellion of the natural man, by coldness in prayer, and above all by a painful sense of desertion, as if God had taken His departure from the soul, and left us to our own resources. We shall be compelled to cry out in these conflicts: "O, that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away and be at rest!" Often shall we utter Job's plaintive cry: "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His lamp shined upon my head, and when, by His light, I walked through darkness!"

Now all these trials, external and internal, must be accepted as conditions of spiritual progress, conditions which are not as severe as they may seem to be. We would all be saints if we had extracted from our troubles the good that they contained; but we are not saints, and are not likely to be, unless we turn over a new leaf, and seek the honey of the bee that stings us. Would that we might take in the whole truth that the abandonment of ourselves into God's hands includes the peaceful acceptance of all that He, in His superior wisdom, may allot to us, whether it be agreeable or contradictory! Would that we might perceive how, in abandoning ourselves to God, we have pledged our wills to accept His orderings without reserve, and with implicit confidence that the things which seem to be against us are really in

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our interest; that evil can be transformed into good; that behind the most sombre veil shines the eternal light.

The impulse of nature is to seek deliverance from trouble and suffering; but there is a higher lesson to be learned in the school of Christ. To Him who is the master of sorrow, as well as the Man of sorrows, we must go, that we may study Him in His way of the Cross, and learn the blessed lesson:

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”

Can our love ever forget that His pains of body and soul were those of One who had more than our capacities for suffering; that every form of trial which came to Him through life was the foreshadowing of His final agony on the Cross; and that He was at length the dead victim of suffering; for, having suffered to the end, there was nothing left for Him but to die? O, let us consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners!

He was personally despised and rejected of men. He made Himself of no reputation. Meriting all the rewards of virtue, He was numbered with the transgressors. Who can measure the woe of conscious innocence when malignity buries it beneath cruel anathemas?

He endured all the straits and anxieties of poverty. He had not where to lay His sacred head. Beginning His earthly life in a humble

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family, He spent years of toil poorly requited, and penury entirely undeserved, only to find Himself at last a despised wanderer.

He suffered the ingratitude of those He came to bless. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." He went about doing good; but had His name been Apollyon, and had He exemplified the fearful import of that name by spreading desolation wherever He went, He would scarcely have experienced less of the esteem, and more of the hatred, of the world. Yet in the midst of ingratitude, how astonishing His kindness! what forbearance and pity does He show to His bitterest foes! how meek His replies! how mild His censures! Over ungrateful Jerusalem, He weeps. On the Cross, He prays for the very brutes who were staining a guilty earth with His blood.

He was wounded in the house of His friends. His companions who could have cheered with their sympathy—one betrayed Him with a kiss, another denied Him, and all forsook Him and fled. He learned how vain was human help, how fickle human love, how changeful human friendship.

Behold Him also in His temptations! Tempted to distrust providence, to destroy Himself, to commit idolatry, He came to an experimental knowledge of the audacity of Satan. Thus was He tempted in all points as we are as to the instrument of temptation, though He had not our susceptibility to its power.

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His physical sufferings were inexpressibly great. A form of manly symmetry, a countenance divinely fair, were marred by pain until there was no beauty that we should desire Him.

His mental sufferings were still greater. Men may paint Christ on the Cross, but art cannot express the broken heart. "All ye that pass by, behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." Yet He shrank not from bearing the sins of the world. "He endured the Cross, despising the shame."

It is necessary often to consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest we be faint and wearied in our minds. We have but to study that One, of all who have run the gauntlet of life's sorrows, whom no transient weakness from within, no cunning temptation from without, could divert for a single moment from His purpose. And we must gaze upon Him, not as on a crucifix to remind us by its sad beauty how to die, but as a living and loving Friend who would teach us how to live. However hard our path, He points us to His own footsteps to assure us that He has trod this way before us.

The Cross has taught us a new philosophy. It shows us that sorrows, pains, and disappointments are in reality blessings. The Christian who would live near to God must live near to the Cross, because the Cross reveals to us the inexhaustible activity of God on our behalf. The troubles He

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sends us are sent, because, in His great wisdom and tender love, He sees that they are just what we need. There is in Him nothing that is short-sighted, or thoughtless, or hap-hazard. He is always planning for our welfare, and always busy with means to help us on to holiness. There is no one so busy as He. He never slumbers nor sleeps, never grows weary, never loses His patience, never forgets, never makes a mistake. His hand always touches our lives; and whether He sends what pleases or what pains us, He sends His love with it. If we would only fall in with His purposes and make of every trouble a sacrament, a means of grace, we should realize the wonderful virtue there is in the little crosses on which we are crucified every day; for if on them we die to our self-love, and self-will, and general selfishness of character, we shall truly rise to newness of life.

For troubles have an immense value in revealing to us our defects. Anyone can sail a boat before the wind with a pleasant little zephyr blowing; but he discovers that sailing means more than that, when there is a stiff breeze blowing against his course. Troubles show that we need many things which we did not seem to need when everything went well with us. We need self-control, patience, charity, forgiveness, trust in God, preparation for the land where sorrows are unknown. Above all, we need to find how deeply in our inmost nature selfishness is rooted; what slaves

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we are to our senses and appetites ; and how much littleness there is hidden behind the good opinions we have of ourselves. Nothing will bring our true selves to the surface so effectually as trouble.

Our trials and sorrows also teach us whom to trust. We cannot trust ourselves—that we soon find out. We cannot trust others. The only mortals we do trust are those who love us unselfishly ; and yet this beautiful love is mortal ; we may not have it to-morrow ! We must not trust a vanishing love supremely. There is but one undying affection—it is the love of God.

Troubles are also intended to prepare us for others that await us. When Job had lost his family and his property, how nobly he bore those calamities ! But there were others awaiting him. He was smitten with a painful disease ; but former trials had prepared him for this, and he was able to accept it without a murmur. “What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ?” Our troubles are prophecies of others to come, and His purpose is to prepare us now for that trying then ; to form within us a faith and courage that shall serve us well in that day when all the waves and billows will go over us. In one word, God wishes to teach us that suffering is one of His choicest forms of blessing.

1. See how true this is in physical suffering. Nothing happens to us in this life without God, who orders all things with consummate wisdom

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and tender fatherly love; and therefore we may seek Him in our bodily pains. Behind that frowning providence He hides a smiling face; and if we will only gaze long enough, we shall see it. When it is written that He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth, we are taught, not that we shall be made happy by deliverance from pain, but happy in it, and because of it. Pain reveals the strength of self-love. It shows how feeble is the faith that seemed strong when all things went well with us; how much more we were trusting in our own strength than in God; and how largely our spiritual state was the merest mental reflex of a sound physical condition. He whose eye penetrates to the inner man saw our need, and came to us in the fires of fever, or the distress of some organic disorder, to dispel the delusion, and to teach us again the lesson of self-surrender into His strong keeping. Each pang which He sent was necessary. And thus it is with all our pain; He hides His love within it, and when we lovingly embrace it as from Him, we find Him in it.

2. The same truth applies to the little cares and worries of life. No one is exempt from these. You think yours are the worst, and would like to change your lot or place to get relief. But, in fact, there is no land of the lotus-eaters in this world. You can read the story of every other life in your own, and thus shall it be to the end; for troubles will not cease, even when we shall have learned to

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bear them. We must not anticipate rest from worry; we should expect to find rest in worry.

There are two ways of meeting our worries. One is to let them worry us—the favorite method! How much amiability has been lost to the world by the nervous irritability thus excited! How many tempers have been ruined! Perhaps there is nothing more fatal to progress in the Christian life; for in effect it is a rebellion against the means by which the Father wishes to cultivate the graces of quietness and peace within us. If they had been great troubles we could have borne them more heroically; but these petty vexations were too annoying to bear, and the more they vexed us the more we permitted them to. This is the process by which excellent people get so cross-grained that there is no living with them. They are in a chronic condition of protest against the very means by which they might learn precious lessons in holiness. The better way is to convert the little worries into helps, by finding God in them. They teach us to trust Him in the minor trials, and so prepare for the great calamities. They teach us charity, patience, submission. Thus they dissolve into blessings; and long after they have been forgotten—for who remembers the little worries of a year or a month ago?—they are represented by the spiritual growth of which they were the occasion.

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3. God sometimes leads our souls forth into a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. Very few are excused from these sad pilgrimages, and from the trials which accompany them. The soul becomes dry, lifeless, indifferent; religious duties are a burden; the pleasure which once attended the soul in prayer has departed; the old order, in which God spake comfortably to the soul, and gave a sense of tranquil joy, a foretaste of the eternal calm, seems to have been reversed. But it is ourselves who have reversed it. We made too much of the pleasures that are ministered to those who surrender themselves to God; too much of tranquillity of conscience; too much of present sensible joys. Spiritual pride and self-love asserted themselves in proportion as we made more of God's favors than of Himself. Then followed a disinclination to the identical duties, in the discharge of which, just now, we felt so much zeal, courage, and joy; and as the soul looked back upon those happy hours when God was so near, it was tempted to throw off the restraints of grace, and relapse into lukewarmness. Once the thought was, Never can I surrender a faith which ministers such comfort and joy! Now it is, "O, that I were as in months past!" We had been tempted to follow the Saviour for the loaves and fishes wherewith He fed us; and now, when in His wisdom He takes these away in order to teach us in some little measure His experience in Gethsemane in the hiding of the Father's

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countenance, we shrink from the bitter hour of desertion. We will not see that God in His loving care would teach us to trust Him when nothing is left to trust but Him. He feeds us on bitter herbs, and we refuse to eat because He has taken away our confections.

Grave perils lurk in this neighborhood. How many who long walked in the light of God have lost faith through not being willing to walk in the darkness of God! It is a very immature faith which has not made some progress towards the triumph of Job: "Though Heslay me, yet will I trust in Him." God's disciplines are unto life; for by them He would teach us to let consolations slip away without a murmur, and to find our supreme satisfaction in Him alone. There is nothing worth living for but God. It seems childish and contemptible to make conditions that we shall have a regular supply of spiritual sweet-meats. This is simply self-love seeking to serve God on its own terms. It is very displeasing to Him who commands us to seek Him for Himself. And yet, very patient with His children, He uses these experiences of dryness and indifference as a means of showing us our weakness. We can understand ourselves better when we have only our bare selves to look at. We see that God is, indeed, the one thing needful. Patient with ourselves in these uprisings of self against the loss of comforts, we must repeat the old act of self-

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abandonment, and accept whatever food He ministers, be it sweet or bitter; and so shall we discover that the bitter is sweeter than the sweet. Then, O then, shall we learn the secret of Moses—the tree which, cast into the waters of Marah, made the waters sweet! Then shall our refreshed and triumphing faith press on to Elim. “And they came to Elim where were twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters.”

4. It would be impossible to enumerate all the phases of the sin of discouragement; for it is a sin to lose courage when God has our souls in His keeping. It shows that we have been trying to manage affairs ourselves. Pride, self-love, or some concealed fault, have crept in and usurped the throne. Then He takes us at our word, and permits us to test our own resources; for well He knoweth that if we trust to our own weakness rather than His strength, we shall have only weakness for our support and deliverance. The sure result for us is disappointment and misery. Wounded pride feels the keen edge of its own folly, and seeks to turn back the responsibility upon God: “It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?” But He who knows us better than we know ourselves bends over us with infinite compassion; watching in this awful crisis for the first faint groping of His child’s hand after Him; ready to reveal Himself in

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the plenitude of His power; waiting to breathe new courage into the soul as it utters the cry of returning faith: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou so disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the help of my countenance."

The chief value of these trying periods of discouragement, in which we are deprived of everything but God Himself, is the acquisition of a larger and more generous trust in Him, which shall be to us for strong deliverance when like trials return; a trust which shall do more than make us meekly submissive; a trust which shall enable us to accept trials in the same spirit in which we accept comforts and joys, thankfully, and with supreme confidence in His wisdom. Clouds and sunshine are alike tokens of His love. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Discouragement comes to us at times because there are so many questions unsolved, so many mysteries, so many things hard to understand. But it is by this very discipline of partial knowledge that God is preparing us for all that we shall be able to know hereafter. We must not be ashamed, nor permit ourselves to be discouraged, because we find ourselves so dull and ignorant. Patience! We are little children at school, and

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must be content to plod on. "Two times one are two" is the first step towards the higher mathematics. In due time we shall know even as we are known. Meanwhile, let us reflect that God now knows all that there is to be known of us. He knoweth that we are dust. He knoweth our downsitting and our uprising. He knoweth the thoughts of our hearts. He knows when to cry, Courage, child!

We should not repine at our little knowledge, but, never satisfied with present attainments, press forward after higher. Our only rest and satisfaction should be in Him who knows all. S. Francis de Sales speaks of Him as one who looks through a lattice and sees us clearly, while we have only a glimpse of Him. It is a great blessing to have a glimpse of the King in His beauty; but it is a greater to know that He sees us with unimpeded vision, knows all our needs, has compassion upon our negligences and ignorances, watches our lives, and even opens the lattice a little wider as the years roll on, that we may see more of Him whom to know is life eternal.

But the little knowledge which God has given us of Himself, how great it is after all! It seems little, it is little, compared with coming possibilities of knowledge; but it is great compared with our former ignorance. I am speaking of spiritual knowledge—loving relations—intimate acquaintance with the Father. If it discourages us at

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times to think how little we know, let us begin to praise Him for that little, since it is so much greater than it was when it was naught—when we cared for none of these things. Remember that the least which God gives us is greater than our desert; and that, were it never augmented, it would still suffice to save us. Remember, also, that if it were to grow to greater dimensions, until we should know even as we are known, it would still be little compared with the infinite and inexhaustible deeps of God. It is so sweet to know Thee, O God, even a little, that we would be content if Thou shouldst teach us nothing more.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### The Ministry of Temptation.

THE ASSAULTS OF TEMPTATION—NO DISCHARGE IN THAT WAR—THE VALUE OF THE CONFLICT—NOT A SIN TO BE TEMPTED.

THE disciple of the Crucified who has acquired habitual self-abandonment, will have learned that God reveals His fatherhood by those veilings of love which we call our trials and pains, our worries and discouragements.

S. Paul represents all things, not only afflictions, but all events, as working together for good to them that love God. This is among the noblest utterances of one to whom it was given to see very deeply into Divine truth. It justifies the inference that all the forces of the natural world; all the developments of history; all the celestial powers; all “spiritual wickednesses;” all human love and malice; all things good or ill, constitute

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an active fellowship co-operating under Divine order or control, to promote the good of those who are in union with God by charity.

This truth, therefore, interprets their temptations also.

Temptations are influences from within or from without, acting through thoughts, passions, or tempers, which dispose the will to violate God's law or forget His grace, for some self-satisfaction.

Temptation assailing a human soul, gets its power from the attractions with which it clothes itself; it always holds out a fascinating reward, a seeming good greater than the good it would supplant. Those who yield get what they desired. Therefore they cannot be said to know what temptation is. But temptation is a terrible word to those who have learned its meaning by resisting it. For that brave soul, resolved to resist unto blood, and not to yield, the word defines the sorest trials of life. It tells of bitter assaults; of battles fought and to be fought; of awful moments of suspense; of narrow escapes, and alas! of disheartening and shameful defeats.

Temptations do not cease to besiege the soul, be it never so strong. A thousand defeats do not discourage them. If they seem to withdraw, it is only that they may change form and appear in other shapes. The holiest men have testified that there is no discharge in that war. You cannot escape them; but you should not desire to escape

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them; for "what does he know who hath not been tempted?" You may grow weary of the long struggle, and despairingly exclaim: "How long will ye imagine mischief against every man?" But, courage! For so long as it does not please you to be tempted, be not afraid. *Hated* temptations are a sign that God has not deserted you. Courage! In the midst of "the furnace exceeding hot," the form of One like unto the Son of God walks by your side. Courage! For deadly campaigns are not the only associations of the word,—it calls up scenes of victory, shouts of joy, and kindling alleluias. Resisted temptations are at once the proof, the triumph, and the recompense of grace.

It is unreasonable to complain of the continuance of the conflict because of the importunity of our assailants. We may rest assured that those influences, from within or from without, which, if successful in their assault upon the will, would precipitate us into sin, are vigorously alive, and keen in their scent of the passions and evil propensities that still hide themselves in the depths of the holiest of men; and though these passions and propensities may by the grace of God be under the control of our will, more or less firmly, they will never cease to be the object of attack until they have been displaced by the virtues of perfection. The Church teaches that concupiscence, or the fuel of sin, remains in the baptized, and is "of

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the nature of sin," in that it would not have existed had sin not entered into the world; and in that it inclines to actual transgression unless opposed. This remaining infection of nature is therefore a capability of sin. The inner capability of anger, envy, jealousy, hatred, and revenge, of the still lower and more humiliating passions, of loss of grace and the ruin of the soul, has not yet been extirpated. The process of its eradication may be arrested, and this we know from experience; it may also be defeated, as we have seen by observation. O, how the heart weeps to think of many whom we knew and, perhaps, dearly loved, who have fallen victims to temptation, and died without hope!

"Many a stately ship lies shattered  
Underneath the sounding seas;  
But the grass upon the hillside  
Waves o'er sadder wrecks than these."

Temptations are permitted to assail us from unblest sources just that we may not forget how subtle, aggressive, and active are the evil forces, within and without, which, if unresisted, would wreck us also, soul and body. It is in this way that God seeks to make evil a ministration of good. "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled."

It is often a source of great pain to scrupulous but uninstructed Christians that they are subject

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to temptations. The conscience is inflamed and a feeling of mortification overcomes them. Conscious that strong forces are at work to lead them into forbidden paths, they bewail their condition, and think themselves to be already under the frown of a dishonored and displeased Father. But why should they imperil their advantage by giving place to such fears? Temptations, felt but resisted and overcome, are separated by the whole heaven from temptations surrendered to. In His judgments of souls, God never "charges up" resisted temptations as offenses. Offenses they are not, but rather victories. It is not the assault, but the surrender, which makes the sin. In the moment when the impulse touches us, we should fortify the will by prayer and renew our surrender to God; we should stoutly denounce and repudiate the source of temptation; we should remember our baptismal vow to renounce the devil and all his works; we should call to arms all the powers of our better nature, and we should remember that God is nigh at hand. The enemy can tempt, but he cannot force us to yield, if we at once yield ourselves into the hands of God. Nothing can be more pleasing to Him than the strong and successful struggle of a soul against enticements to sin; for it is the triumph of His own grace poured freely forth upon the tempted free-will, and the triumph at the same time of the will itself, which thereby again expresses its preference for Him. Let us not then tremble at

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temptations, as though being tempted were a fault. "Be not troubled, however great the temptations that assail you. Let the enemy rage at the door; \* \* \* we are sure he cannot enter but by the door of our consent. Let us keep it closed, often taking a look to see that it is properly fastened, and there is nothing to fear" (S. Francis de Sales).

We must also consider that continuous successful resistance is a fruitful means of increase in spiritual virility. It is not the parade-ground, but the battlefield, which makes the soldier. If by the cessation of temptation we should become exempt from the vigilance, conflicts, and chances of the soul's battle-fields, we would probably lapse into effeminacy, and become mere parade soldiers. But our greatest need as soldiers of the Cross is the very lesson which resisted temptations teach us; that lesson of faith by which Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. For if we live not as seeing things invisible, we live not as Christians. It is easy enough to see what we can see with the eye of sense; but to see with the soul's eye is a painful education. When we study life with the eye of faith we see the eternal Father every where present. The most trivial event is large enough to claim His interest. We see by faith how much more there is in every passing moment than can be discovered by the eye of sense;

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how much vaster is the drama in which we are playing our parts; how different is the far off event to which everything tends; how serious our mis-judgments of the relative value of things. Faith bids us choose for our ideal and destiny that of which sense has no knowledge. Faith reveals evil as a good, and sin as overruled into a blessing. On the other hand, what poor work sense makes of it! what confusion! what doubt and unbelief! what disappointment! what worldliness and self-seeking! what unrest and misery! The Spirit speaks to our spirit, and then, forsooth! we turn to Him the ear of sense.

Now, temptation met face to face, and overcome, becomes transformed into a means of curing this preponderance of sense. It puts squarely before the will the fateful alternative. It shows the chance of surrender and cowardly defeat, it is true; but it also presents the opportunity to develop the soul's vision, and to throw the whole weight of one's being on the side of faith—an exercise which promotes spiritual virility, and substitutes Christlike manliness in place of that sentimental courage which is very brave in activities, but very invertebrate in self-denial, and resistance of seduction to paths that are pleasing to the flesh.

When the whole weight of the will casts itself on the side of the Spirit it enlists the whole weight of the Divine will in its favor. There is no moral crisis so unseen and unimportant as to escape the

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watchful interest of God. Nothing is insignificant to Him in whose eyes there is no difference between our great and our little. All things are alike to Him who made all. For all emergencies of the soul, then, has His watchful interest provided.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### The Ways of Escape.

EXPECTATION—RESISTANCE—AVOIDANCE—FLIGHT—SUBSTITUTION—GREATER ATTRACTION—PRAYER—DISCRIMINATION.

**S**PAUL tells us that God has furnished a way of escape from every temptation, so that no one need fall into the condemnation of the fore-fathers in the wilderness, who, when tempted, yielded, and were sorely punished. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

This divinely provided way of escape presents itself to our minds under many forms, of which some may be particularized.

#### 1. The way of expectation.

The orderly succession of days is not more certain than the coming of temptations. Until

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our susceptibility to temptation ceases (which shall not be in this life), the tempter will not withdraw from the field, nor will God cease to permit these salutary trials. We must expect them, and we ought to prepare for them. Those who are so unhappy as to succumb to their assaults, will be found to have lost the habit of anticipation. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." The strength of an army is its preparedness. Half the battle is won when the first onslaught of its foe finds it vigilant and ready for action. Too many Christian people are soldiers for peace only. They respond with alacrity to the influences of religion, and flee to God's mercy on nimble feet. The sense of pardon fills them with rapture, and songs of praise burst from their lips. They dream themselves called to happiness, while their true vocation is to holiness. Present happiness is incidental only,—a little dispensation of sunshine bursting through the clouds that hover over the battle-fields of the soul, the gift of God to weary soldiers to reinforce their courage and inspire them with hope, and very different in character from the emotions of a superficial devotion. But these mercurial disciples shrink when songs must give place to war's stern alarms. They believed for a while, just as long as there was nothing disagreeable to be done; but in time of temptation they fall away. He that would withstand in the evil day, must put himself in a

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state of fully equipped readiness, expecting trouble, but unabashed and strong at heart if covered with the whole armor of God.

### 2. The way of resistance.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He knows when to persist and when to retreat. A will which fortifies its fortitude by strength from above and stands firm as a rock, has settled the issue. The important point is not to lose one's head. He has nothing to fear who cannot be frightened. There is no power in temptation of itself,—its only strength and opportunity is the weakness of our will; and when that is strong and calm as a mountain, temptation disappears like a passing cloud. What an example we have presented to us in the temptations of our Lord! Without agitation or fear He turned His face on the adversary, and with one word of deep significance vanquished him: "Get thee hence, Satan." We need to copy that calm courage, if we also would triumph. It will tax our powers, and the tension may for a little while be almost insupportable; but resistance ushers in as great rewards as victories, for it shall be to us as it was to our Lord: "Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold angels came and ministered unto Him."

### 3. The way of avoidance.

Many temptations are the natural consequence of putting ourselves, thoughtlessly, in the way of danger. We know from experience that there are

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certain situations with respect to persons and places where we shall surely meet with temptations. Let us exercise foresight, and avoid such situations. The occasions of sin are as much to be dreaded as the sins to which they entice us.

“And Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom.” It was a wrong and disastrous approximation. The beautiful valley which he chose was bordered southward by Sodom, and “the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before God exceedingly.” His approach was gradual. He pitched his tent *towards* Sodom. Then seeking other pastures for his flock he encamped still nearer; and when he reached the neighborhood of the city it was not long before the tent that was pitched toward Sodom was exchanged for a house in Sodom, with consequences to himself and his wife and children which one shudders to recall. We must avoid Lot’s folly. We must shun dangerous places, wrong companionships, doubtful vocations and recreations, demoralizing books, everything which would make it harder to escape from temptation. We must learn the art of saying, No! in things not wrong in themselves, but which experience has shown to be wrong in their tendencies or associations. The Church does not require of her children an extreme asceticism; but she commands them to use their liberty wisely, and solemnly does she demand a strong pure life which will make no compromise with the worldly spirit, nor approach

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too near that border-line of morals which marks off her modest asceticism from self-indulgence and frivolity. The siren voices of Sodom will call in vain, the luring devils of the world will tempt in vain, those who enter into the fulness of that restrained life which she renders practicable.

### 4. The way of flight.

There are temptations which we dare not face. Such, for example, are temptations to sensual sin. We can escape them only by fleeing from them. We should not stop to parley with them, but at once and at any cost neutralize their fascinating power by physical separation and distance; as a bird hunted on the plain seeks the greater security of the forests that mantle the mountain slope, by instant and rapid flight. "Flee as a bird, to your mountain."

### 5. The way of substitution.

Every temptation points to a definite result, some particular sin of thought or desire, of omission or commission. In place of the perverse inclination suggested, a valorous mind will substitute its opposite virtue as the end in view, and concentrate all his energies on its acquisition. If the besetting sin is self-conceit, answer it back by some act of humiliation. If the tongue is ready to defame another, punish it by speaking favorably of him; and no one is without his good points. If you are on the verge of vexation because someone has been stupid and thoughtless, recall similar

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lapses of your own. It is possible to master, or at least modify, the violence of any passion by practising its opposite. One of the meekest and gentlest of men became so by this artifice of substitution. "The humility which you admire in the saints is conquered pride; gentleness is conquered anger; patience, conquered sensuality; charity, conquered selfishness."

### 6. The way of greater attraction.

The power of temptation lies in its attractiveness. If it did not offer promises of seeming good, it would tempt in vain. If there were no profit in gaining the whole world, men would not risk their souls for it; but there is profit in many ways, as they estimate values. He who yields to the seductions of sin justifies himself by the pleasure which it will afford him. Let us stop to analyze the results which are held out to us as a glittering bait. Is the good seeming or real? What have others found it to be? And is it more attractive than God? Is it so desirable that to gain it I am willing to dissolve the union of my soul with the source of all true joy? Or shall I dissolve the spell it throws over me with indignation, and cleave to Him?

And this suggests the obligation which binds us, neglect it though we may, to increase our knowledge of God; for the more we know of Him the greater is His power to draw us away from the fascinations of temptation. If we limit our

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conceptions of God by what we know of Him, and are eager for no more, we dishonor Him and dwarf ourselves. In God—and this is the lesson Christian people need to take to heart—there are infinite depths. He that made the heavens with all their shiny host which no man can number, and whose farthest heights the most penetrating glass cannot scale, shall not His majesty be greater than the heavens, and His glory above the stars? O, if my God were only as my little thought of Him, my life would be bereft of its highest motive; for, while the glory that is revealed is enough to win my heart's homage, and the majesty which I can perceive arouses within me a sense of awe and hushed adoration, my whole being is prostrated in lowest humility, and deepest worship, and overwhelming fear, when I think of Him as infinitely more attractive than the loftiest conceptions which the mind of man has formed of Him. It is a terrible thing not to know God in such a way that no fascination of the world, or the flesh, can have any reigning power over our wills.

### 7. The way of prayer.

This means many plaints in words, and many ejaculations scattered along the way, as, Lord, have mercy upon me; Christ, have mercy upon me; Lord, have mercy upon me. But are we lonely pilgrims, assailed in the desert of this world by fierce Bedouins, with nothing to depend upon but our own feeble resources and a distant friend, upon

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whom in the urgency of our peril, we call for help? There is no basis in the facts of spiritual life for such a theory as this, and yet it is the most that many make of prayer.

What we call the spiritual life is the united life of the Holy Spirit and our spirits within us. "The kingdom of God is within you;" within you as a distinct person, a body, soul, and spirit; within that spirit which is within your body, that spirit which is the center and home of spiritual life, because it is the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. When we are tempted, we are tempted to dishonor this interior union; to desecrate the temple of God which we are, and to insult the Awful Majesty and do despite to the Tender Love of our Divine Indweller. Now we see what is the real essence of that which we call prayer. It is the action of the human spirit taking refuge in the Holy Spirit for deliverance and victory. The Christian who believes that he dwells in God and God in him, and that he has wholly and lovingly abandoned himself to God as his interior guide and guardian, may test the reality of his surrender as the habitual disposition of his spirit, by the fruits of his prayer. Does the Holy Spirit, responding to the cries of the human, give strength to abhor and resist the seductive forces that seek to destroy the union? Is the Divine Indweller teaching him to make good use of the ways of escape? Have the old tyrants that held the will in chains loosened their grasp?

## The Ways of Escape.

Rest assured that the present vigor or debility of temptation is an accurate measure of the present condition of our interior union with God; a union more and more cemented by our resort to Him for help in every time of need. Temptation will have lost its power of successful assault when, by long exercise of this prayer, His rule within us is made perfect.

### 8. The way of discrimination.

It has already been pointed out that there is all the difference in the world between temptations overcome, and temptations surrendered to. In either instance there is conflict, and the pains and perils of the battlefield; but victory is victory, and defeat is defeat. Victory supplies a theme for the songs of angels, and defeat rejoices those whom we have no reason or right to make happy. There is great need of enlightenment in this matter; for many are almost as unhappy over the assault as over the defeat. They must be taught to discriminate. You have been distressed and disheartened by the sudden presence of impure thoughts or images, or of unbelief, or of rebellious feelings against God, which have been injected into the mind, as it would seem, without premeditation on your part. These experiences are very painful in any view of them; but how do we receive them? If they fill us with horror and disgust, and if our wills rise up in stalwart resistance of them, we may, and ought to, rest quietly in God, and suffer

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the serenity of our trust to be disturbed only as we would be disturbed by the barking of dogs on the street. Disagreeable, but harmless!

In times of temptation we often feel as if God were so far away, and so silent, and seemingly so unconcerned. "O that I knew where I might find Him!" But we must discriminate between God and our perception of Him. Be patient with yourself; for it is your vision which is dim, and not God who has gone away. Do not despair because you are finding out what a poor pair of eyes your soul has. The film over your sight does not diminish the golden splendor of the sun in the least.

Successful temptation is always followed by other temptations, chief among which is the temptation to despair. "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that \* \* \* we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" But before we succumb to this serious attack, let us take a little time, steal away to some quiet retreat, and think: What does defeat signify? Have I really changed masters, and substituted disloyalty for love? Does this one treasonable disregard of my Father's will really represent me? And must I tremble as if the bells of doom were ringing the knell of my soul? Or, is this painful defection contrary to the general tone and intent of my life? Because tripped up for the moment, do I really propose to renounce my intention to live in and for God? O, my God, anything but that! "Do

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I not hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against Thee?"

We should also discriminate between trials and temptations. Trials are of God, and minister to our profit if we receive them as He sends them. "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." But temptations are not of God, and their end is sin and death. "Let no man say when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God." The Divine relation to temptation is that of an overruling control, by which what is in itself unto evil is circumvented, as it were, and made to contribute to good ends. Our relation to temptation is that of a strong, wary, vigilant soldier to his foe; and we must fight it to the death.

Good Christians are sometimes subjected to assaults of extraordinary severity. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." In its fright and desolation the soul infers that God has forgotten to be gracious, and has delivered it over to the oppression of the enemy. But we must distinguish between the signs of desertion and those of discipline. If the former (which God forbid!) we shall be glorying in our shame without much present worry. If the latter, we shall find David's words on our lips: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise

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Him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

But alas! our temptations are not always resisted. They have proved their strength, and too often have we in our weakness done their will. Yes, and so will it be (let us hope in diminishing frequency) to the end. There is no one who has not fallen. All the shining ones have treading that dolorous pathway. But over against these lapses is the unutterable patience of God, in praise of which may we spend an eternity of alleluias! S. Paul told his son Timothy that he, as the chief of sinners, obtained mercy, that in him Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. He was a pattern or example of the inexhaustibleness of Divine forbearance towards an erring but penitent soul; and well may we gaze long on that pattern which tells us that God is as truly our refuge when we have lost the battle, as when we have won it.

And then let us begin again. It is a wise maxim which teaches us to be always beginning again to repent, to believe, to surrender ourselves, to trust, and to love. There is not as much danger in the failure of a beginning, as in our failure to make a new beginning. We cannot become again literally what we were. We may hunger for the fervor of our first espousals, but that would be to long for the flowers rather than the fruits of our

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early joys. They will not return, and it is well. "Let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation"—this is the governing principle of progress. Nevertheless, the practice of self-abandonment is a perennial duty as necessary to the well-being of the soul now, as then. We may therefore address ourselves to God as if we were just now for the first time approaching Him on the terms of His invitation; we may begin as if we had never begun before; as if it were the first time, though it may not be *as* that first time. Let us renew our baptismal vows. Let us approach the altar as if it were our first communion. O, my God, my old self has got me into trouble again, and my proud heart, which Thou hast often broken with the hammer of penitence, is trying to put itself together again. What can I say but that it is just like me? Only one thing more, dear Lord, can I say—it is just like Thee to be ready to receive again Thy foolish creature, and remember not, through the obliterating power of the Cross, the sad record of my lapses in the hour of temptation.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### The Means of Grace.

THE GRACE WHICH MAKES HOLY, FOUND IN THE MEANS OF  
GRACE—THE LAW OF LOVE AND THE LOVE OF LAW IN  
UNION—THE CHURCH, SACRAMENTS, AND MINISTRY TO BE  
HONORED.

THE zealous worker who expends his energies upon external utilities, putting excessive emphasis on his activity, as though God had not called him primarily to an interior life, is liable to commit the error of making of his labors a sacrament. His valuation of their influence in promoting growth is so high, that he seeks from them the force that shall sustain his faith, or the stimulus that shall revive his drooping graces; and he urgently exhorts the beginner to engage at once in some form of outward activity as a choice means of culture. This sacramentalizing of "work" depreciates the importance of God's appointed

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channels of grace as promotive of progress in holiness. To such an extent has this been done, that we are in no danger of exaggerating the orders and sacraments which Christ hath ordained, if that were possible. We do not believe it to be possible, if they are used in the manner intended by Him who instituted them. A perversion of the Divine intent in their use, however, does not justify their disuse, or the denial of their grace.

Notice how the sacramentalizing of work concedes the necessity of the sacramental and ascended principles. Those who deprecate the grace of orders, assume functions which are distinctly sacerdotal in their semblance; and in denying the grace of the sacraments they invite us to find grace in other instrumentalities. They cannot escape the principle because it lies in the very nature of things.\*

The incarnation is the supreme evidence that God has adopted the mediatory method, by which fallen man may seek His face and not die. Our

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\* A writer in *The Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette* exposes the fallacy of the common expression about "not allowing anything or any one to come between God and the soul." Those who use it, he says, seem to take the word "between" in the sense of an obstacle, rather than of a connecting link or medium. A bridge comes between the opposite banks of a river; but it comes between not to separate, but to connect. Between the shores of opposite continents sail the great passenger steamers, not as barriers, but as necessary connecting links. The extreme individualistic theory is incompatible with belief in the visible Church. But, says this writer, people are not always consistent. He cites the case of Garibaldi, who said, "I believe in God. I am of the religion of Christ. I do not admit any intermediary between God and man." He lost

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Lord said: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Fundamental to Christianity is the apostolic declaration: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And it is evident that our Lord adopted and extended the mediatory method in His establishment of the Church, with its ministry and sacraments, for the purpose of carrying on His work in the world. These instituted means are so essentially associated with, and developed from, the incarnation, that those who reject them ought *pari passu* to decline to walk in that royal highway to the King's palace, and this they would do if they were logical. Alas, many are! The sacerdotal and sacramental principles are of the essence of Christianity; for Christ was our great High Priest, and His authority underlies the instruments of Grace. To be rid of sacerdotalism, His priesthood must be destroyed. To escape the sacraments, His authority must be denied. It is wiser to hold fast to the old truth, that He, who is the only priest by nature,

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no opportunity of expressing his hatred and contempt for priests. Yet he himself baptized an infant at Verona. He said: "I baptize thee in the name of God and of the legislator Jesus. Mayest thou become an apostle of truth! Love thy neighbor; assist the unfortunate; be strong to conquer the tyrants of the soul and of the body." Without dwelling upon the alteration of the baptismal formula as ordained by "the legislator Jesus," it is to be observed that on this occasion Garibaldi acts as an "intermediary" himself. We believe it was never imagined that anyone might baptize himself, and therefore it is inconsistent for one who does not admit an intermediary between God and man to retain baptism, or to profess allegiance to "the legislator Jesus."—*From the Living Church.*

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chose to extend His priestly work by delegation or ambassadorship. On His first appearance among the apostles after His resurrection, He uttered these solemn and pregnant words: "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you;" and powers spiritual which had been previously exercised by Himself alone were committed to them as His agents and stewards. And then He fastens His people to the very throne of God by this chain of three links: "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me"—a three-fold reception which binds together in an indissoluble unity the Father manifesting Himself, the Divine Man who is this Manifestation, and the sacerdotal agents doing His work through the ages, blessing His people by their benedictions, baptizing them by their baptisms, forgiving them by their absolutions, confirming them by their laying on of hands, and conveying His precious Divine Humanity to them by their eucharists.

It is necessary to revert to these first principles because many who seek the grace which makes men holy, shrink unreasonably from the means of grace. Awakened Marthas who hunger to find the one thing needful which Mary chose, and who desire to carry their solemn resolves into good effect, must seek God's guidance where they received their baptism, their confirmation, their communions. The Ethiopian eunuch understood not the prophecies which foretold a suffering

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Messiah—"How can I, except some man should guide me?" But when S. Philip (acting in the name of his Master) opened the scriptures unto him, he believed and straightway asked for holy baptism. O, if souls hungry for God and groping in darkness for lack of a little help, would only ignore the barriers which error has put between them and their spiritual fathers, how many of our Marthas would seek Mary's place at the feet of Jesus! Go, troubled spirit, go to your pastor and tell him your desire; or if not to him, to some priest wise in the things pertaining to the interior life. Or, if this dreadful reticence cannot be overcome, do not, for your undying soul's sake, stumble on in ignorance and consequent misery for the lack of God's guidance, through the written means by which those who are wise in the science of sanctity have sought to counsel you.

Above all things, the heart that is hungry for God needs to be heroic in freeing the conscience from every trace of that one-sided subjectivism which makes little or nothing of the Divine ordinances, and which has vociferated the charge of defective spirituality against those who hold to the institutional and sacramental ideas until many believe it—a charge to be met with a straight strong denial, and a fearless appeal to history and comparison of fruits. Spiritual graces are not the antithesis of the means of grace. God has joined them in one. The law of love and the love of law

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are co-partners. Separated, the legal tendency no doubt works into formalism; as the sentimental tendency ends in antinomianism and fanaticism. But love, regulated by law, finds expression in definite rules of conduct and methods of approach to God. It is the nature of the hidden principle of life which God has garnered in every seed to develop after its kind; lifting its first tender spire of green to the air, putting forth leaves and branches, making its prophecy of bloom in the nascent bud, and bursting at length into the beauty of the perfect flower. When grace springs into activity in the soul its growth is by the means of grace. Those who shun the sacraments because they think the law of love to admit them to immediate contact with God, without means, must be warned that He who has appointed the means, and commanded us to own the love of law in all its regulative power, has not justified their opinion. They deny a universal principle; and it is not surprising that some baptize their enthusiasms of unregulated feeling with the name of perfection; nor is it any wonder that their professed absorption in God has the appearance of absorption in themselves. Why do they not remember that God's love under the old law expressed itself in a covenant, a decalogue, an altar and a priesthood? Why should it seem incongruous that, under the new law, that same love should express itself in an Incarnation, a Church, Sacraments, and an Apos-

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tolic Ministry? Love, then, as the human response, should seek to shape itself to those external helps and appliances which have been appointed. To live our human life, we must plod along the beaten paths of duty, guided by the angel of common sense, without making much account of wings and rapturous soarings just yet. Love wants to know how to love God and man; and it should be glad to visit Sinai and ascend to the Temple and sit at the feet of them that sit in Moses' seat; and it will not wish to see the new law shorn of those visible institutes existing by God's will in time and space, by which it expresses its worship of Him, and its charity towards men. The Church idea does not relegate me to the misty region of pure spirit, telling me to go wander like a ghost wherever my emotions may lead me; but rather ministers to me as an embodied spirit by its sacraments and orders, its laws and offices. It comes to the infant in its cradle, follows it in its youth, blesses it in its maturity, smiles upon its nuptials, opens the treasures of grace to its penitence, sheds tears of mingled sorrow and triumph over its tomb, and ever bears it in remembrance as one of the members of Christ, that it may have its perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in the eternal glory. And the Church furnishes love a sacred language in which to syllable itself by acts of faith and worship, by obedience, by beneficence, and by holy endeavors after an interior life. Thus

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the Church is the garden in which the flowers of sanctity best grow; for therein the Holy Spirit is, as it were, its very atmosphere.

In rejecting the conventional standard of discipleship, and resolving to lead a life of preference for God, we must say: "I will arise and go to my Father." But where shall He be found? One reason why so many Christians lead exterior lives is because they think of God as living somewhere exterior to themselves. Omnipresent He certainly is; but those who seek Him shall find Him where He finds them. Now the very essence of the Church idea, and of the sacramental idea, is that in the means of grace God, and I, meet, and are made one. We dwell in Him and He in us. All mediatory contact touches our spirits. The love of law dovetails into the law of love. Hence, he that would find God must look within, where sacramental grace finds the soul. There is the scene of the new birth. There is the throne-room where He listens to prayer. There is the secret place where the Body and Blood nourish us, and where we enjoy sweet intimacy with our Lord. There is the school in which He teaches us how to abandon ourselves into His keeping, without fear or reservation. The essence of formalism lies in our not following the means of grace as far as they go. Follow the sacraments as far as they go, and they will make you a saint. Follow them, and a silence more mystic than that of a chancel at daybreak

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will take up its abode within you. The voices of the world cannot penetrate that solemn silence. Ineffable peace dwells within. Victories are gained over self, and the flesh is subdued to the spirit. More and more the soul learns not to trust itself, and more and more learns that it can do all things through Him who makes over to it His strength. It becomes by degrees easier to avoid sin and its occasions; to mortify the passions; to moderate the imagination, and to bring the reason into subjection to Eternal Wisdom; to love God with no uncertain affection; to take adversities as blessings, and to see in every cross a sign of love.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### At the Altar.

THE INCARNATION THE UNION OF TWO WORLDS—THE HOLY EUCHARIST ITS ANALOGY—THE NEW EYE AND VISION—RELATIONS OF THE BRANCH AND THE VINE.

THERE are souls lifted up by grace to the atmosphere of a devout life, who know how to leave everything behind, and find the mystic sweetness of a Divine sanctuary in the secret of His Presence. To them that Presence is the purest joy of life; the foretaste of heaven; the prophecy of eternal salvation. Into the hiding of that Presence they come, and forget the care and turmoil of the day; to Him they flee from the specters of the mind; there they listen to the voice ear hath not heard, and lean upon the bosom eye hath not seen, and lose themselves in the depths of the great mystery which steals over them like a dream with charmed beauty—real as a dream is not, but

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realized only by those whose spirits are open to the inflow of supernatural tides.

There are some things which are true as the existence of the sun is true—we perceive them with our physical organs. But the deepest truths are those which it is not possible for the senses to perceive. These are spiritual truths. God, who is pure spirit, no man hath seen, or can see. Man is like God in that he is a spirit; but unlike Him, first, in that the resemblance is marred by sin; and secondly, in that man is a spirit joined to a body material. By the constitution of his nature he exists in two spheres; one the realm of spirit, one the outer world. In him the two spheres meet: spirit embodied in flesh. Now He who has endowed us with this duplex nature would not seek our exaltation to original uprightness, without reference to the nature He would uplift. In His Son, our Lord, He has brought these two worlds together, so that they touch and mingle, each retaining its identity; and yet each so communicating itself to the other that when we look upon one, we see the other. He is the God-Man, God and Man, Pure Spirit in union with humanity.

In the fulness of time, when the union of these two worlds was made manifest—(the spot was at Bethlehem), this Person with two natures appeared. It was a great mystery, but also a precious revelation. It furnished fallen man, “weary of earth and laden with his sin,” a place of sanctuary. It

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procured pardon for the penitent, rest to the heavy-laden, hope to the disconsolate, holiness to the sinful. His life on earth was one long divine effort to win prodigal men to the Father by identifying Himself with their sorrows, and by sacrificing Himself for their sins. He veiled His deity, He immolated His humanity, "He dissolved, as it were, His greatness to reduce it to the figure and form of our littleness," that He might draw us men back to God through Himself; and thus it was that in this refuge for sinners the poet's prophecy was fulfilled—"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

But the Gift of God and the union of the two worlds in Him was not designed to be a temporary outshining of the Divine glory for the brief tenure of a theanthropic life cut off in its prime. The grave, which seemed to swallow Him forever, could not retain its prey; nor did the opening heavens, which seemed to claim for Him an eternal restoration to the glory He had put away from Him for our sake, hide Him from our eyes. He who descended to earth without quitting heaven, ascended to heaven without quitting earth. The secret of His presence divinely veiled in the depths of His humanity was a perpetual gift, reappearing and continued in the sacrament which His dying love bequeathed to be our hiding-place, until He

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shall come again in unveiled and visible majesty. The outward signs paint their image on the eye :— behind them is the Manifested God. O, ye Christian souls, who can find no rest in service, and no balm to mollify the disquietude that makes your life miserable because the divine succor and joy and strength seem so far away and so unreal, why will ye not comprehend the love which has supplemented the secret of the manger, by the secret of the Supper? Why will ye, who hunger for heavenly manna and thirst for living waters, wander in the darkness of unmanifested divinity, stumbling along on paths which your eye cannot discern, making journeys on which God has not sent you, when here, in the earthly home of your soul, is spread the divinest of banquets with which to satisfy your hunger and thirst?

But it is to *the secret* of His presence that we must come! Yes, it is a Divine mystery. If it were perfectly comprehensible, it would by that token be traceable to human authorship. Divine truths attest their origin by transcending the power of the creature to know them exhaustively. It is the very mystery of the altar which suggests the presence of Christ. It lifts us towards, but not to, the ineffable heights. The relation which exists between the thoughts of the Infinite Mind and a created intelligence suggests the relation of man to the dumb animal; one may be kind to the animal which follows him with every expression of grati-

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tude which his eye can utter; but one still retains a world of thought and feeling infinitely beyond its knowledge. We should not aspire to comprehend the unsearchable counsels of the Almighty beyond the line of revelation. He withholds even His revealed glory from the cold microscopic stare which will know nothing save what it sees. There are truths which must be approached as angelic spirits approach God, with veiled faces, and which altogether elude the gaze of irreverence. When our Lord was about to be seized of the Nazarenes to be cast headlong down a precipice, "He, passing through the midst of them, went His way." The penalty of a frigid handling of Divine things is that the Divine element vanishes from the sight, and will not reveal itself to eyes all too willingly blind.

Poor, bereaved world, how hast thou cheated thyself of the presence of thy Redeemer by stumbling at the secret of His presence! How hast thou given thyself over to weariness without rest, to the strife of tongues and the pride of man, to unconsoled sorrow, to the gnawing dissatisfaction of a life over which God is permitted to spread no pavilion of shadow and repose! Poor, doubting Christians, stumbling at one sacramental mystery yet accepting others! How have ye won for yourselves the toils of a stony road where no waters be, and a wilderness where there are no oases of fountains and palms!

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To find God within the silence of eucharistic mystery, the power to see beyond the veil is necessary; and how earnestly we should pray for this new sight! That blind man nigh unto Jericho heard them say: "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," and he cried for mercy. Then answered our Lord: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" "Lord, that I may receive my sight." O that such might be our prayer—"Lord, that I may receive my sight," and see Thee in the solemn mystery of Thine own Feast! It is recorded by S. Mark that after His resurrection, our Lord "appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and went into the country," on their way to Emmaus; "but their eyes were holden that they should not know Him," S. Luke tells us. He was in another form, and yet it was the same Jesus—another form, therefore they could not see Him. Their eyes were holden, because they were "slow of heart to believe." But it was in the breaking of bread that their faith returned. "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them." "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." O, that our eyes might be opened to see that, although the Bread be another form, and the Wine another form, none the less is it the Sacrament of His Body and His Blood!

Moreover, let us consider that He whom we seek in this sacrament, is seeking us. It is our duty to make worthy preparation; but we should

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not think of the priest and ourselves as the only active parties in this solemn transaction. That is but a small fraction of the truth; and, indeed, if that were all, it were a small truth. But the living Christ loves to come to us; for "His delights are with the sons of men." More intensely does He desire to bless than we to be blessed. All the attributes of His nature are on fire with eager desire that we may be transformed into His image, by participation in His Divine Humanity. If it is the highest honor of our lives that the Lord comes to be our meat and drink, the highest honor we can return Him is to eat of that bread and drink of that cup; that in us He may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. In the secret of His Presence hides the heart that loves us, the hand that saves us, the friendship that fails us not, the wisdom that guides us, the guardian that keeps us. As earnest is His desire to come to the memorial of His Passion as was His desire for the baptism of blood, of which He said: "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

And, wherefore this consuming zeal of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? He has one crowning motive—the soul which seeks union with God shall not seek in vain; for He represents the desire of God for union with man, and is the means whereby that union is effected. When ardent lovers of things unseen prefer God above all created objects, and seek Him before they seek to serve Him, and

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habituate their wills to this choice by continuous self-abandonment to the order of His providence, and to the influence of His grace, nothing is more precious to them than His own sacrament of union, in which they who feed upon Him grow up into His likeness. We are in Him, and He in us. His life and ours is a community life—we have all things common. When the forces that flow from Him enter us, the elements of character that are unworthy begin to weaken, and will finally become extinct, for whole Christ is made over to and formed within us, the “one thing needful,” the antidote for sin, the hope of glory. This union is that of the branch and the vine—the branch is in the vine by union with it; the vine is in the branch by imparting its life to it. What munificent provision is thus made for our growth! The sacrament is as full of what we need to make us such disciples as Mary was, as the ocean is of water. It was ordained to convey the richest blessings heaven can bestow. It is the garment with which Jesus vests His sacred form; and humble souls, when their faith touches it, find virtue come forth from Him. If we honor It we honor Him; if we depreciate It or neglect It, we reproach Him. It will bless us according as our hearts are open to It; for while we can do nothing without Him, He will do nothing without us. There was no want of water in Jacob’s well at Sychar; but the woman of Samaria could carry away only as much as her

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water-pot would contain. The more we seek, the more we find. The more we make of Him, the more we are made like unto Him.

But let us remember what the Apostle said of those who did not discern the Lord's Body: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

## CHAPTER XX.

### Prayer.

IMPERFECT WAYS OF PRAYER—THE LIFE OF PRAYER—ITS SUPREME MOTIVE, LOVE FOR GOD.

THE term prayer in its signification is marvelously broad and inclusive. A man of prayer is one who has obeyed the injunction: “My son, give Me thine heart.” He who prays aright practically obeys the whole law; and fulfils the two commandments, on which hang all the law and the prophets. He who does not pray is Christian only in name. He who does not pray much is not much of a Christian.

There are many imperfect phases and degrees of prayer, the consideration of which will help to a conception of the true prayer.

1. There are some who pray vocally, that is, they say their prayers. They have set forms either printed in books, or written down in their

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memories, or carried at their tongues' end; and they go through these in the morning, or in the evening, or in both. But often there is little activity of the mind, and little spiritual energy put forth. When in church, they follow the prayers and say the responses and amens, but without much reflection. It is not well to pass harsh judgment on such prayers. They do not stand for much earnestness; but the worst of it is that they are not very productive. No doubt souls have been kept back from grave sin by them, and restrained within the limits of respectable behavior; but such prayers do not contribute to growth and progress.

Persons who rest in the saying of their prayers are apt to think there is great virtue in many prayers said, and much time consumed. But our Lord condemned those who "think they shall be heard for their much speaking," and immediately commanded, "After this manner, pray ye: Our Father," etc. The value of prayer refers us to quality rather than quantity. Importunity has the right of besieging the throne; but in our ordinary habits of devotion let us remember that simplicity and reality will put much prevailing prayer into few words. Better three minutes of prayer than thirty of recitation. Let us remember, also, that there is in reservation, for those who persevere, a prayer without words. The habit of verbal address merges in a state of quiet, in which the

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soul reposes upon God with simple trust and unsyllabled love, and for a time loses itself in Him. This prayer is the oblivion of self and all created things; and comes, after a long time, to those who have sought to make God their All in all. But it does not come at our bidding. It is one of the forms of special blessing which He bestows on those who have attained the humility of nothingness before Him. But it does not supersede vocal prayer.

We must not fall into the serious error of depreciating vocal prayer. Its necessity lies in the very constitution of our nature, and rests on the same rational basis as the sacramental principle does. We have a spiritual part and a corporeal part; and the perfect performance of duty involves the co-operation of these. As well refuse the sacraments as neglect vocal prayer. The whole tenor of the Scripture, as well as the precept and example of God Incarnate, and the unfailing practice of the Church, and the exhortations of the holiest saints, demand that we shall, "with one mind and with one mouth, glorify God." And vocal prayer justifies itself by the results which attend its proper spiritual use as a habitual means of communion with God. Perhaps the higher attainments in the ways of prayer, to which reference has been made, would be impracticable without long antecedent practice of vocal prayer. Let us beware of violating proportion. It would be a sin

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to neglect the prayer of words; but it would be another sin to rest in it as the whole duty and privilege of the soul which loves God.

2. There are others who pray earnestly only when they are under the spur of an emergency. Some spiritual need comes to the front, as when temptation has made a successful assault on the will; or sickness lays siege at the citadel of life; or earthly friends prove false; or the besetting sin has brought disgrace. The spiritual nature awakes, and the fire of devotion blazes up for a little moment; but these "for a while" Christians easily relapse to their ordinary condition when the emergency has passed.

3. Others pray vigorously only when they want certain temporal blessings. They were content with the treadmill of formal prayer as long as things went well with them; but now there is a question about getting what their worldly hearts covet; or there is some dangerous exposure before them; and they humbly fall upon their knees to beseech God that He will grant them their desire. Perhaps we must classify with them those who ask the Church's prayers when they are going to sea, and forget to offer thanksgiving "for a safe return." Perhaps, also, this may in part account for the disuse of the Churching office after "the great pain and peril of child-birth."

4. There is another phase of prayer which is very imperfect. Are we not apt to pray for spirit-

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ual blessings only as we ourselves stand in need? There are unfathomed depths of self-love in the heart, even when that heart has strongly turned toward God. Self-love always comes to the surface when we try to be unselfish, and to remember tenderly the interests of others. We offer our prayers to One who loves the world, to One who has taught us to say, "Our Father," to One who spreads the covert of His wings over the whole body of Christ; and we ask only for our personal needs (we who profess our faith in "the communion of Saints!") and we rise above the plane of prayerlessness only far enough to plead our own interests at the throne. There must be a large development before our desires expand so as to include the wide world's need, and the far-reaching redemptive purposes of God. O, that we might realize the wonderfulness of that petition in the Litany:

That it may please Thee to bless and keep all Thy people;  
*We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.*

And this:

That it may please Thee to have mercy upon all men;  
*We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.*

These varied imperfections in prayer are traceable to a common source. All are the prayers of those who come short of making God the primary object of their affection. They are prayers tinctured with self-love. It is not given us to know, and we should therefore shun to suspect, how

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many of these prayers are heard; that is, how many *are* prayers. All *prayer* reaches heaven's ear; but can self-love make itself heard? All that we can say is, that our Lord paraphrased the Summary of the Law ("Hear, also, what our Lord Jesus Christ saith," etc.), when He said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

5. Prayer must necessarily be vitiated by a wrong relation of the soul to the holy will of God. It would be well to consider why we have asked and received not; and why we have possibly been embittered against God, as though we had been mocked and cruelly entreated. How much need there is that we should understand what prayer is, and what are the terms and conditions of effectual approach to the throne whence all blessings are dispensed! How much more just we would be, did our rebellious attitude face our own defects, rather than God's faithfulness to His promises! It is blasphemous to assert that He can fail. On the other hand, the wisdom of Solomon says that "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss," said S. James.

Christian people who have had a great sorrow, some disaster or bereavement, sometimes seem ready to "curse God and die," because He has not heard their prayers for deliverance from impend-

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ing evil. Now God is very tender towards such impiety; for He sees that mixed with it is much turbulence of that natural grief which never reasons, and seldom falls upon its knees. But no one knows so well as He that the present outcry against Himself, as though He were a vengeful Jupiter delighting Himself in thunderbolts, would not exist had the heart been previously trained to make Him its All in all; and to prefer Him to all earthly objects of affection; and to love Him, not by loving them less, but by loving Him more; and to see how all prayers of petition are our blindness asking God to do what is best in His estimate of expediency; and to rise to the height of singing the song of Jesus in Gethsemane: "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

The imperfection of our prayers, whether arising from error, or from ignorance of the nature and conditions of the prayer, or from the tremendous spiritual indignity of loving some gift or blessing of God or one's self more than God, indicates the need of instruction. The very first petition an awakened disciple should offer is: "Lord, teach us how to pray!" He will teach those who seek practical guidance how to enlarge the scope, elevate the character, and intensify the reality of our devotional life.

But above all He would have them grasp the sublime truth that prayer covers a vastly wider ground than the daily repetition of Collects, or the

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use of the devotional offices of the Church, in public and in private; that it is far more than asking for things; that it is more than a duty; that while a duty it is the highest known privilege, opportunity, and happiness. It is meditation, adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, penitence, humility, but more than all these. Prayer is that operation of a man's spirit by which he places himself in the presence of God; humbles himself to the dust before His Majesty; makes himself over into God's hands; abandons himself just as he is to the custody of God, to be shaped and made over by Him; surrenders his will to be wholly dominated by the will of God; renounces the authority of self, and gladly puts on the yoke of Christ; opens his soul wide to the inflow of grace; concentrates his entire being upon the end for which he was created, and devotes himself so entirely to God that he can honestly say: "Whom have I in the heavens but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee!"

Thus it becomes apparent that prayer is a life. It is the response of the soul to God, not as an isolated occasional act; not as a routine habit at intervals, but as the very breath and being of the soul; and so habitual that it may be said of one who thus prays, that he prays without ceasing; though not in the sense of unbrokenness of petition, or of uninterrupted concentration of the mind upon God. He does not require us to transcend the possibil-

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ties of the nature with which He has endowed us ; nor to drop out of our vocations, our business, our cares, our worries, our relative duties. Neither does He require us to be always thinking of Him to the neglect of others. He is well pleased when we give ourselves to present duty, for duty is due to Him as well as to others, and thus duty becomes prayer, when it is done in Him. "Imitate the little birds : they light on earth only when they drink, but even then they lift up their little heads heavenward at every sip" (S. Francis de Sales). Thus we see how the life of prayer must be continuous, for it is nothing less than that state of strong adhesion to God, which binds souls forever to Him so strongly that they would rather die than offend Him, or lose their hold upon Him. The life of prayer is, simply, the life of self-abandonment to God. One of the most astonishing revelations of the nature of God is His love for prayer and His intense desire for it. "The prayer of the upright is His delight." When we consider His infinite self-sufficiency, and that He was plenarily happy in Himself before any creature was brought forth, we wonder how our poor prayers can minister to His felicity. They are not necessary to Him, and yet, while He bestows ten thousand blessings upon us without our asking, He puts restraint upon His desire to bless us yet more, by withholding other gifts until we ask, so intensely does He yearn for our prayers ! And why ? Because prayer, as a

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life, is the highest level of created spiritual existence, and is the victory of God in the soul. He has won another throne! Another life is shaping itself to the great end for which it was created.

But He exhibits this astonishing predilection for the life of prayer because of the motive upon which it rests. This is not the sense of duty, nor the stimulus of self-interest; not the force of habit or religious fashion, nor the fear of punishment for neglect. Its highest motive is love for God. Those who rise to the full opportunities of the Christian life do so on the pinions of love. They see in God such beauty, such spiritual attractiveness, such winning power, such depths of sympathy, such hunger to help, that the soul is irresistibly drawn to Him; and, like a little trusting bird, hides itself in the covert of His wings. The highest homage we can offer is to love Him for His Own sake; and this is the love He most loves to bless. There is a vast power of sanctification awaiting him who habitually contemplates the glories of the Divine nature. He who learns to love Him, learns to love like Him. The splendors of His nature pour themselves into the heart in such floods that it is gradually transformed into His image. The more men see of His beauty, the more they thirst for holiness. The incomprehensible wealth of His nature in every quality that is high, pure, noble, strong, wise, loving, draws them with an irresistible force of spiritual magnetism towards these qualities, so that

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they are thereby weaned from the petty attractions of the world, while these qualities begin to be reproduced in them.

This life of prayer, built up upon love, is for all; although there are few who realize it, and many who think that it is not for them. They do not believe it possible that they could learn to love God with such a strong affection. They honor Him; own His authority; respect His laws; do service in His Church, and seek to win others to His kingdom; but they cannot affirm that they love Him; at least they do not identify in their hearts an attachment so strong that it can justly be called by the name of love. That such persons are scarcely fair to themselves is evident; for love is a many-sided gem. They are certainly impressed with God's goodness, and thankful for His kind providences. This is the love of gratitude. They obey His commandments, and would be utterly unhappy if they should wilfully break one of them. This is the love of obedience. They perceive His glory in the heavens, and the amazing power of the Creator everywhere. This is the love of admiration. They revere His attributes, and adore Him. This is the love of reverence. But after all this, it is true that many stop short of loving God for what He is in Himself (without reference to what He does for us, or for universal creation); which is the highest tribute of love which the human heart can pay to Him. There is an attract-

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ing power in the spiritual perfections of God, which only those can know who seek to know, at any cost; and there have been men who, by seeking, have found such revelations of love that they were fascinated away from all earthly delights, and fixed their hearts on Him with supreme joy. There seems to be a principle of reserve observed by this wonderful Being, by which He holds back, as behind a veil, the brightest revealings of His nature, until earnest souls surmount every obstacle, sacrifice every inferior claim, and press upward to cast themselves, at last, at His feet, and adore the awful, but attractive splendors, of an infinite love.

But this is a commanded duty incumbent upon all. Is not this the first and great commandment? Shall we be content to love God for His gifts only? Shall we love Him only because it is our duty? Shall we love Him only because not to love Him is to lose Him? No! We must learn to love Him, because in Himself He is worthy of our love, and of more love than we can ever render Him. No man can gaze long at God in prayer without becoming overwhelmed with the essential splendor, and beauty, and attractiveness, with which His Majesty is clothed; and when this revelation sinks deep into our nature, we are henceforth changed men. A new light gilds the world. The sacraments and practices of religion are transfigured; nothing remains as it was. O, is it not strange that we,

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who love ourselves so much, and love human imperfection in our best beloved so much, should draw back from surrendering our hearts to Him who challenges us to love Himself supremely? "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me." Why? Because there never has been, or shall be, a human being whose father or mother, son or daughter, could justly claim the affection which is His right and due. Upon every ground, whether of gratitude, consanguinity, natural affection, self-interest, or congruity, He is entitled to the first place in our hearts' true love. O, God, knit the unclean, fragile, earthly threads of our love into the cloth of gold of Thy perfect love! Thus shall the life of prayer become ours.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### **Mental Prayer.**

THE PRAYER OF MEDITATION A LOST ART—ITS NATURE AND NECESSITY.

PAYER, as has been said, is a generic term, including every relation which may exist between the faithful soul and God, as well as the means by which such relation is maintained. It must suffice at present that prayer be considered under but one of its aspects; one, however, the importance of which is incapable of being exaggerated; first, because it has fallen into disuse to such an extent that multitudes know it not at all; second, because the highest spiritual benefits have resulted from its revived use; and, third, because its persistent use educates the soul for other and higher degrees of prayer. To these, however, no reference will be made here.

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The form of prayer which we are to consider, is the Prayer of Meditation.

### 1. Its nature.

By the prayer of meditation is meant the action of the mental faculties, in the presence of God, by careful thought and reflection, upon subjects which relate to God and the soul. It is generally called mental prayer, to distinguish it from the prayer of petition, or the asking for things agreeable to the will of God. The prayer of meditation always leads to the prayer of petition, because by its exercise we learn distinctly, and feel deeply, our necessities. And not only so, but in meditation we are taught such lessons concerning God that we are sweetly moved to give Him all our confidence, and to throw ourselves upon His bosom with loving expression of our inmost desires.

The prayer of meditation begins with simple meditation, or the action of the mental faculties, by which we scrutinize, analyze, and draw conclusions from any given subject. But it is not a cold, unimpassioned outlay of mental acumen, which, however sacred may be the theme under consideration, can produce only intellectual results. It is desirable to increase our knowledge of things Divine, but with a nobler aim than the increase of knowledge. Spiritual fruitage should be the end in view. Meditation is the discursive process by which the mind supplies the spirit with fuel for devotion.

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Meditation is the action of the mind upon subjects of thought; but the *prayer* of meditation is the action of the spirit upon considerations, which have been drawn out by the action of the mental faculties. As prayer, therefore, it is simply the converse and communion of the soul with God on the basis of an intelligent appreciation of truths. As a holy writer has said: "Mental prayer is nothing else than a friendly conversation with God, by whom we know that we are most tenderly loved."

The purpose of the prayer of meditation indicates the nature of it. To what end does God inspire this prayer? With what intention do we offer it? That the sacramental union of our spirits with Him may be strengthened by spiritually applied knowledge; that we may grow in reverent intimacy with Him; that we may acquire a wisdom not taught in the schools of human learning, and a strength which shall qualify us to quit ourselves like men on the battlefields of the soul; and that we may go on to those loftier attainments in which the soul is made one with Him, the will is swallowed in His, and the grace of the sanctified spirit already begins to reflect the brightness of that glory into which it hopes to be finally merged.

Meditation must be prosecuted with vigor and animation; for we much need material with which to construct our prayer. We have small resources

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in ourselves, intellectually; and when they are exhausted, spiritual barrenness and apathy follow. Many people are weak in prayer, because they are intellectually slothful. Their great need is stimulation to devout thought, over and above the passive reception of the customary sermon, in hearing which, there is ordinarily as little mental activity as physical. It costs little to listen: it costs much to think, to seek knowledge that may be transformed into prayer, and made to bind in closer intimacy the spirit of man with his God.

There is no sequence of natural law more inevitable than that spiritual growth will follow, if we accustom ourselves to turn aside into a solitary place, and, for the soul's sake, seek knowledge with all our manhood's might.

The Rev. F. W. Robertson has given us an illustration in natural life which is very apposite. He says: "It was in this way that one of the greatest of English engineers, a man uncouth, and unaccustomed to regular discipline of mind, is said to have accomplished his most remarkable triumphs. He threw bridges over almost impracticable torrents, and pierced the eternal mountains for his viaducts. Sometimes the difficulty brought all the work to a pause; then he would shut himself up in his room, eat nothing, speak to no one, abandon himself intensely to the contemplation of that on which his heart was set; and, at the end of two or three days, would come forth serene and calm, walk to

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the spot, and quietly give orders which seemed the result of superhuman intuition. This was meditation." When we work for results as heroically as this, and then take them to God in prayer, we shall discover new lessons in the sweetness and the power of converse with Him. "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

A "Quiet Day" is an object-lesson in mental prayer. We come together for prayer; but the first duty of the conductor is the choice of subjects, and the expenditure of thought upon them. The considerations which are offered intensify truth, burnish tarnished consciences, stir up affections, revive holy memories, make God more real and near, and so environ the soul with sacred influences, that we are stimulated to seek God with freshness and avidity.

Another illustration is presented in the parable of the Prodigal Son. He was sent into the fields to feed swine. He was hungry, and would have eaten the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. And then he began to think. Long and seriously did he consider his forlorn condition. Then his heart was touched. And when he came to himself (stirred to the depths of his soul by his reflections), he said: "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" The thought of the old father at home kindles the deepest emotion

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within him, and he exclaims: "I will arise and go to my father!" His will was aroused, and he arose and went to his father—the last, but most effective, step of all. He did what his mind and his heart prompted him to do.

The prayer of meditation will have little fruit unless it is regular and habitual. Indeed, it must be made the habit of the soul by constant repetition, before it can accomplish great things for us. No day should pass without a strong grasp of some truth, or fragment of truth, by the help of which we may pour out all the fulness of our hearts before God.

And, as it is prayer, it must be offered in His Presence. We know that God is, and that He is omnipresent. Therefore, He is here. We know that He loves to enter into communion with His children. We believe His promise, that, if we seek Him, we shall find. We believe that we are in Him, as a fish is in the ocean; that in Him we live, and move, and have our being. We believe, also, that He is in us, as a Divine Indweller. Our nature has been compared to a temple with three apartments: the outer chamber of the senses, the inner court of the mind, and then, in the inmost seclusion of the temple, a Holy of Holies, which is the spirit—that part of us which is nearest to God, through whose humble portal He condescends to enter, and take up His abode within us. In the silence of that holy place is the Presence of God. There He waits

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to hear our prayer. "It is as if when with another person, if the light be extinguished and all be quiet, without seeing or hearing him, or being aware of any bodily movement, we converse with him as present."

### 2. Its necessity.

Its necessity appears when we reflect that man is a reasoning creature. His mind acts upon the material presented to it, and, as the result of consideration, arrives at a distinct and intelligible notion. Ordinarily, no one acts without reason for action, however crude and unjustifying the reason, and however wrong the act may be. The processes of discursive reasoning exist in all, however low the grade of intellectual development may be.

Education is the drawing out of the mental faculties in order to the acquisition of knowledge. It is a training and development. But it goes farther; for it teaches how to use or apply the knowledge acquired, in a reasonable manner, and with reference to its objective end, or aim. It is, however, only a preparation; of the highest necessity, but wholly nugatory as to practical result, until it is actually applied by the energy of the will. Knowledge which goes not out of itself is only an aristocratic form of ignorance.

Now this precisely illustrates the necessity of the prayer of meditation. We can make no progress towards God without an immense efficiency of will. There are so many forces pulling in other

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directions that our exertions need to be almost superhuman. It is easy enough to say that we believe; easy to make one honest act of faith in the higher possibilities of the Christian life; but O, the strain that comes when we seek to repeat that act into a habit, and rise to our opportunities! *Hic opus, hic labor est.* The will requires help and strength. It needs an iron tonic. This tonic is meditation. For the will can be moved through the understanding. It is by discursive thought about those things which are congruous with the higher interests of the soul, that we acquire considerations which inflame the will with the resolve to live in closer conformity with the will of God. A state of ignorance, or a passive resting in the little driblets of knowledge which have trickled into our minds without our own effort, will certainly retard, and possibly arrest, progress. Spiritual education is as necessary as intellectual cultivation. This implies personal exertion, which often has to be carried forward to the most heroic lengths; for, although anyone can see how simple and intelligible is the duty of engaging our minds in meditation upon sacred themes, no one can realize the greater difficulties to be encountered until he meets them. It is harder to expend mental energy upon themes that prepare us for spiritual ends, than upon subjects less heavenly.

Meditation is necessary, because the prayer of meditation is necessary. Meditation shows the

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way; prayer leads to God. Meditation without prayer is a letter written, but not mailed. Holy thoughts must point the way to holy virtues. It is not enough to *know*, though one have the whole science of theology at his tongue's end, and can quote scriptural texts by the thousand. “*Meditatio, oratio, tentatio, facit theologum,*” is an old saying—“Meditation, prayer, and temptation, make the theologian.” Knowledge, in other words, must be applied to the soul in all the manifold exigencies of its course. The will takes its orders from the understanding, and obeys. It rests not in what it has been taught, but presses on in the path of practical duty, that it may live for God alone, and make Him its All in all. There are too many *dilettante* Christians, who rest in their little stores of knowledge as complacently as the ostrich who buries his head in the sands, and thinks that to be safety. A quaint writer says: “If we sew, we must have a needle; but it is not the needle, but the thread, which sews; and it would be a ridiculous thing, and lost labor, for a man to busy himself all day long in sewing a cloth with a needle alone, without any thread in it. They act, however, nearly in the same manner who meditate, and make many reflections in prayer, without applying themselves to produce acts of the will, as acts of charity, humility, etc. For meditation must be like the needle; it must pass first, but it must carry after it the

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thread of love, and such affectionate acts as unite the will unto God."

The necessity of meditation, or serious consideration of truths, appears in the example of our Lord. Thus, when He wished to teach the unreasonableness of corroding anxiety about the supply of temporal needs, He suggested the study of nature. "Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them; how much are ye better than the fowls?" "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not; they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these. \* \* \* How much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

The prayer of meditation is necessary because we need the blessed fruitage of it. By this we draw near to God intelligently, our affections are enkindled, our wills are guided and quickened. We come into possession of priceless treasures, of which we would have remained ignorant had we confined ourselves to the prayer of petition. We see clearly, where once we walked in shadows. The heavens are opened above us, and we walk in the light that streams upon our pathway. God crowns prayer with His smile. The sting is taken out of trouble, and we find more and more joy in acts of entire self-abandonment into the hands of our strong Keeper.

It is the universal judgment of the masters of the

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science of sanctity, that the prayer of meditation contributes in the most wonderful manner to the development of the soul in holiness. It was said by one that it was not possible that a person who practised it daily should be lost. No one has found it to be anything but a fountain of healing waters to the soul. No one ever gave it up without falling into grave sin. No one will give it up with deliberation, unless he has resolved to give up God.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### The Prayer of Meditation.

THE SUBJECTS, THE METHODS, AND THE RESULTS OF MENTAL PRAYER.

**T**HIRD, let us consider the subjects of Meditation.

These are innumerable. There is scarcely a page of Holy Scripture upon which the soul may not profitably meditate. Here is a large and inexhaustible library of Divine knowledge. But beginners in the prayer of meditation, in order to learn the art, may find it necessary to train themselves by the use of manuals of meditation, which may be had. Favorite themes are the Four Last Things. Others prefer the Parables, some the Miracles, some the Beatitudes, some the Commandments, many the life-giving Words of the Lord Jesus. The Perfections of God ought to be

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considered with constant and adoring study, for which the Psalms are an inestimable treasury of devotion. For the sick, and others of weakened mental force, good hymns are often very helpful in exciting the will, and opening the path to the throne. But there is a peculiar virtue in the devotional contemplation of the Passion of our Most Holy Redeemer. At the foot of the Cross is the secret of the saints. It is there they learn most vividly the awful nature of sin, as well as the mysterious depths of God's love for the world.

But as meditation is a devotional exercise, we should avoid subjects that are too high for us; that appeal only to curiosity; that excite the controversial mood; that do not easily arouse our interest. It is very easy to rest in the meditation without passing on to the prayer. Simple should be our thoughts, and child-like our attitude. "Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely, I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

### 4. Its methods.

It is desirable to choose the subject of meditation before the hour set apart for this most ennobling form of prayer; the day before, if the morning hour. This is a great advantage, because the mind will naturally recur to it at times during the day, and the heart will burn with desire to meet the Lord.

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When the hour has come, kneel down, "humble as a little child," use the collect for Whitsunday and the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*; and guard against being formal, stiff, and unnatural. Do not wait for some great feeling to come to you; but just realize that you have entered into the dear presence of your Father. O, what a privilege and opportunity! O, how great is His condescension! Thou art here, my Father, as truly as I am here; here to guide my thoughts; to bear with their wanderings; to stimulate my will; to inflame my affections; to strengthen my resolutions. Help me, dear Father, to shut out all the world; all thoughts of yesterday, and of this day upon which I have entered, that I may concentrate my faculties upon this one thing needful. Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; nevertheless, I implore Thee that Thou wilt make my meditation sweet.

Naturally enough, your subject, previously chosen, will now present itself to your mind. Read over what you are about to think over, and then, begin again, and THINK.

We must avoid a mechanical use of method. To begin with the use of the mind, then pass on and appeal to the affections, and then resort to acts of the will would be absurdly unnatural. With the activity of the mind, the affections and the will may be concurrently aroused to express themselves in prayer, ejaculations, and resolutions.

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We need method to guide us, but not to enslave us. Those who practise the prayer of meditation daily, will soon learn to observe method without noticing it. Be patient with yourself at first. The great thing is to think fresh, strong thoughts, and ask God to apply them. That is the end of meditation. We exercise the discursive faculty in order to excite the instinct of prayer, and the spiritual action of the will. Inasmuch as we do so in the presence of God, and under the invocation of the Holy Ghost, we ought reverently to expect the illumination we have asked for. "While I was thus musing, the fire kindled, and at the last I spake with my tongue." Stop when a thought impresses you; for it is a token that the still, small Voice is whispering within. Do not pass on to other considerations, but dwell upon this, until you have extracted all its sweetness. "In this we should do as the bees which stop on a flower as long as they can find any honey in it, and then pass on to another." (S. Francis de Sales). Such a sense of the Divine presence may overshadow the soul, and such a readiness of converse be given, that thought at last shall melt into acts of penitence, love, humility, and adoration.

Do not confuse the affections with the emotions. Your thoughts may touch the heart, and the eyes may sprinkle your book with tears; but ordinarily the best blessings come to us when we are calm and still. Love is a deliberate act. Sooner, a

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thousand times, prefer to love God as the homage of your will, than as a tribute of your feelings. The affections do not need to certify their reality by shouts of rapture, or moans of sorrow. Mistake not natural feelings for supernatural grace.

Distraction is the great bother in the prayer of meditation. It is a bother, but not a sin. It is no more a sin than the passing of a steam fire-engine in the street. Do not stop, but keep right on in your meditation, offering up your weakness to God. "For He knoweth our frame: He remembereh that we are dust." We shall have to endure distraction and wandering thoughts a long, long time, as the just penalty of past superficiality and lack of concentration; but there is no sin if we do not make too much of them, and if we learn quietly to push them aside, and proceed with our prayer. Do not begin again, saying to yourself, Now I will concentrate my powers without distraction, and put my whole soul into every word! You will only attempt the impossible. Distraction follows the soul that prays, like a shadow. Do not worry over a shadow; dismiss it with contempt, and go on. Distractions which we despise and dismiss become prayer. It is remarkable to observe how business men apply their minds to transactions requiring all their powers, without being turned aside by the noise and whirl of a great centre of trade. There is the same opportunity, if we will persevere, to acquire recollection in prayer, without worry over inevitable distractions.

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There are times when the heart seems benumbed as with cold, and the desire to pray vanishes. This is sometimes the natural effect of our own faults; but it is probable that this experience often comes as a test or discipline, administered by the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of teaching us not to rest in our fervors. He withdraws everything but Himself, from us. It brings a gloom and aridity that is very sore for the eager soul to bear; but that is the very purpose of it, that we may bear it; for what matters it whether our faculties are lively or torpid? In either case, it is our triumph to seek consolation in God Alone. Be assured that when He withdraws sensible enjoyment, it is only that we may be taught to surrender ourselves more entirely to Him. Certainly, there is no moment when we need Him more, or need to feel our need more, than when He seems to leave us to ourselves. Remember, too, that He is never more near to us than when we dream that He is far away. "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer."

And now one more precept. Never rise from the prayer of meditation without a deliberate resolve to apply this or that lesson to yourself this very to-day. This is most important, for it clinches all that has gone before. "I will arise," said the prodigal son; "and he arose and came to his father."

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An act of thanksgiving for that which the dear Father has done for you in your meditation, followed by an act of humility and abjection, will fitly close the sweet hour of prayer.

Of the place of meditation, it may be said that one can think and pray anywhere. We can carry the solitude of the mart into the busiest scenes of life; and, indeed, who can afford to close the doors of the little oratory in his breast, wherever he may be, and whatever his pressing duty in this world? But this should not excuse us from "the closet." There is immense virtue in retiracy, silence, and aloneness. By precept and example, our Lord has made His will concerning this very plain. The church, when its doors are open (and when should they be closed?), is a favorite place with some.

For private meditation, the morning hour should undoubtedly be preferred. After God's blessing of sleep, the powers of the mind are fresh and vigorous. Early Communions are very precious to many, because they seem to be better able then to collect their forces of soul, and centre them on the Lord in the Sacrament. But as the prayer of meditation requires a time, you must take time at any cost. This is the great battle one has to fight. Herein "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There is always time for the necessities of dress and food; but what so necessary as the well-being of our

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souls? We must make time, if no more than five minutes; and in the prayer of meditation that will seem a long time to the beginner. But the briefest period, honestly and earnestly spent, will stamp the impress of heaven on the heart, and exercise a sanctifying influence throughout the day. Suppose, for example, that you have only five minutes in which to meditate on the miracle of the healing of the blind man nigh unto Jericho, with earnest acts of penitence, faith, humility and love. It will be very strange if all the day through you do not often repeat the pathetic cry: "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

### 5. Its results.

The reverent consideration of sacred subjects must always arouse the conscience, and stimulate the spiritual susceptibilities; but when the prayer of meditation becomes habitual, so much a part of one's daily life that omission produces in the soul the pain which unappeased hunger produces in the body, the effects upon Christian character are transforming.

While the acquisition of knowledge for the mere sake of knowledge is not the end, it is incidentally valuable. The treasures of sacred knowledge are inexhaustible; and we should always be eager to learn new lessons in this noblest of all the sciences. In the culture of one faculty, we acquire habits of application and perseverance, which will be of the highest benefit in the culture of another. The

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powers of the mind, when trained and regulated, contribute much to a healthy balance of the whole nature, and to that right judgment in all things which is indispensable in our spiritual development. Moreover, the constant study of religious truth is a very potent safeguard against false views. Superstition and fanaticism are the progeny of ignorance. Untrained minds originated most of the heresies which have risen in rebellion against the Catholic Faith.

But, as the end of meditation is the promotion of the soul's union with God, we look for its holy fruitage in the domain of the spirit, chiefly. Souls innumerable, having their sanctification at heart, have found this way of prayer to be the pathway to union with God.

It loosens the hold of earthly interests upon the affections, it brings into bold relief the real End of human life, it demonstrates that there is but "one thing needful."

It brings God near, and reveals Him in such glory and beauty, that the soul is strongly impelled to make Him its All in all.

It brings the devout soul near to God, and inspires it with the confidence and reposed intimacy of the little child.

It promotes awe and adoration by revelations of the overwhelming majesty of Him who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, continually doing wonders." Thus, it infuses into the whole

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life a sense of holy fear, and makes of every action an act of worship. It teaches the soul to walk softly before the Lord, and to hold in reverence all those things by which He makes Himself known.

It excites the activity of the will, and maintains its energy under the most adverse conditions.

It fills the soul with ardent desire and strong purpose to become emancipated, wholly, from the reigning power of sin. It enables the will to go forth upon the battlefields of purgation with every assurance of victory. It helps to gain the day, and has a just right to rejoice in every sin subjugated; every disposition to return to the old paths of self-indulgence neutralized; every virtue springing up and growing in the place where evil habits formerly flourished.

It puts force and virtue into every solemn resolution to lead a new life after the pattern of the man Christ Jesus, and is a strong help in carrying such resolves into good effect.

It disposes to that lifting up of the gates of the inner temple, by which God is invited to enter in and abide forever; which implies the honest renunciation of self, as guide and ruler, the repudiation of reserve or half-heartedness, and the substitution of the will of God in the room and stead of self-will. It stimulates the soul to repeated acts of surrender by daily self-oblation, until there is enthroned, in the secret "deep of the heart," a perfect will to do, to suffer, or to sacrifice whatever

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the Father may command, and all with joy. There is also a willing acceptance of God's will as it shall be manifested in the future, without fear of evil, without anxious forebodings, with supreme conviction that all things always shall work together for good to them that love God.

It influences the will to express itself in holy affections. It reveals sin, and repentance ensues. It exposes the subtleties of self-love, and then follow humility and mistrust of self. It points to the Everlasting Arms, and challenges the soul to confide in God, with implicit trust. It shows forth His goodness, and opens our lips in songs of grateful praise. It tells of His love, and kindles ours. It teaches us to join with the eternal ascriptions of all angels and spirits who cry: "Holy, holy, holy!"

It fosters in us an ever-growing desire for aloneness with God, that we may have communion with Him in the strange sweetness of that confidential fellowship which comes after awhile to persevering souls—a fellowship in which, without loss of reverence, the heart whispers its inmost desires in His ear, and speaks with Him as friend answereth to friend. Sometimes these confidential relations take the form of colloquy; and sometimes there is silence, pure rest, unsyllabled love, deep and mysterious peace.

It cultivates such a high conception of God, and such relations to His being, that the vision of the

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trained spirit may behold Him as Pure Spirit, and may rise to the height of contemplating Him without the need of mental forms and images. Meditation has then exhausted its possibilities, and frees the soul it has so long blest for loftier flights into the Divine; but few are they who soar so far.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### Service the Fruit of the New Life.

THE CONVERSION OF MARTHA—THE MESSAGE OF THE NEW MARTHA, “THE MASTER IS COME AND CALLETH FOR THEE”—THE SECRET OF TRUE SERVICE REVEALED.

MARTHA, as long as she acted upon her theory of order and precedence in duty, was cumbered with much serving. Externalists do not find much rest for their souls in wearing the yoke of Christ, and they soon become weary of the burdens they have so zealously assumed. Her task was too great for one pair of hands, as it seemed to her vexed mind; and therefore, with that lack of delicacy (to say nothing of self-forgetfulness) which very “practical” people usually show, she actually proposed to lead Mary away from the presence of the Messiah, that she might bear a hand in the work of the kitchen.

Martha, poor soul! did not yet perceive that the natural tendency of zeal, as the master-motive

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of action, is to make more of the work and the worker than of Him for whom it professes to labor. Blindly bound up in itself, it knows no wisdom like its own; and, proud of its petty deeds, it condemns, as lacking in "spirituality," those who refuse to drown, in the clatter of guilds and societies, the Voice which calls them to the good part which shall not be taken away. She did not perceive that they who would really do good, must first devote themselves to becoming good. She did not yet see the truth, which was soon to burst in splendor on her soul, that the chief end of a Christian life is to be re-fashioned into character-likeness to the Lord Jesus, by the unreserved surrender of the entire being into His hands—by that surrender made plastic to His touch. It was the missing thought in her busy and useful life. She could not yet understand how anything could have a stronger claim than "work," or be a greater help.

Mary, sitting at the Saviour's feet, was an object-lesson, illustrating His view of discipleship, and teaching Martha her error.

And now there came a crisis in her life. She began to see herself, and all her exterior service, in a new and revealing light. It was scarcely a light; it was a glimmer of the coming dawn; but it sufficed to startle her self-complacency. The activities of which she had been so proud, pluming herself that no one was so useful as she, pleased with the

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praises of her neighbors as the just desert of her merit, now began to appear less commendable than she had claimed, and they conceded. Gradually the dawn must have brightened into day; and with increase of light, her heart melted within her. She saw things precisely as they were; and the revelation began to move her whole nature with transforming power. She could not but fall down at the feet of Jesus, close by Mary's side, bewailing her folly with many a sob, and vowing with many a tear to seek a humble share in that good part which her sister had chosen.

What a remarkable scene! Martha, the busy worker, kneeling silent at the Saviour's feet; Mary, looking up at His face with tender gratitude for the triumph of His word; Lazarus, forgetting the pains of disease in the fulness of his pleasure; the weary Sojourner, calmly resting in the love and adoration of all. More grateful to Him those sobs of penitence, and those words of love, than the daintiest feast which all Bethany could have spread before Him.

S. John paints the portrait of the new Martha. Some time afterwards the Lord Jesus was again on His way to Bethany. Lazarus had just died, and his body been deposited in the tomb. Martha, hearing of His approach, ran out to meet Him on His way; and when she saw Him she said: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt

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ask of God, God will give it Thee." And is this our dear old friend, the practical busy-bee? Is this Martha, showing such overwhelming faith in the power of the Messiah, and His prevalence of intercession with the Father? Yes, for all things have become new, and the humbled spirit has learned the lesson of the good part in all its fulness. Then comes His quick recognition of her changed state; and He, who had once rebuked her worldly spirit, now confers upon her the honor of hearing from His own lips the secret of the resurrection: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Then, for a test of her marvellous faith, He asks: "Believest thou this?" He asks her to believe, on His bare word, what an Apostle afterwards refused to believe, until he had put his finger in the prints of the nails and thrust his hand in the pierced side. O, woman, once careful and troubled about many things, how simple, pure, and clear is thy vision now! "Believest thou this?" asks the Master, and she replies: "Yea, Lord; I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

S. Peter showed not a faith more beautiful, triumphant, and rock-like in its strength than this; and, since Martha echoes his very language, has she not her share in the benediction of Simon Bar-jona? "Blessed art thou, \* \* \* for flesh and blood

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hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

Then notice also, how changed are her relations to Mary. It is perfectly beautiful, the story as you read it. As soon as she makes the great acknowledgement, the highest act of faith of which she is capable, in which she is the peer of the great Apostle, she goes her way with rapid pace to the Bethany home, and calls her sister aside, to whisper in her ear the tidings : "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." What strides in humility, as well as in faith and love, has this changed woman made! How unconsciously she keeps herself in the background, and how delicately she puts her sister forward! And when afterwards the Lord came again to Bethany (S. John xii. 1-3), and they made Him a supper, Martha, with her active, busy, helpful nature, could not but lend a helping hand. "And Martha served." But how changed her service! how recollected her demeanor! how divested of the former self-assertiveness and presumption, the former petulance, and even impertinence! She loves and adores while she serves; and there is no word of rebuke when Mary pours the costly nard upon the feet of Jesus, and, in the exuberance of her devotion, wipes them with her flowing tresses. Martha and Lazarus (for he that was dead "was one of them that sat at the table with Him") unite their grateful hearts with her tribute of love. Rebuke and criticism are now the *rolé* of Judas.

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And now may we listen to the new Martha's message, uttered with the affection and earnestness of a soul that has been converted from a false theory of the essential principle of the Christian life: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee!"

It is *the Master* who calls!

Fresh and strong as the blast of a trumpet comes the call, from Him who knows how Divine authority has correlated the duties of the Christian as to their order and precedence. With that call sounding in our ears, zeal should drop its quibble with shame, and obedience respond to the argument of love. His voice cleaves through all self-conceit, and lays bare the hypocrisy of the heart which gives to service the first place that belongs to God. It is so easy to choose the lighter labor, and spend ourselves on that which costs the least outlay of strength; and when we have seemed to soothe conscience with external activities to the neglect of the severer grapple of the will with our interior deficiencies, we do not love the keen edge of exposure, even when His hand wields the knife. But "faithful are the wounds of a friend."

The acute thrill of pain that pierces our self-satisfaction is only another form of the Master's love; and, if so accepted, is the presentiment of our conversion. When the Master despoils a soul of trust in its doings, He confers the best of blessings; and the more He takes from us, the more His mercy is ready to bestow.

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It is a call personal to each one of us!

It singles us out, and in the depths of the individual conscience cries: "Martha! Martha!" Have we not heard that call? Have we not in our busiest moments of exterior activity been startled by it, and been led to suspect that there is something deeper, nobler, more Christlike than *to do*, which is, *to be*?

It is the call of the Master to become as the Master, whose inner life was a continuous self-oblation to the Father's will!

God longs for *us*—not for our poor little possibilities of labor. He is jealous of the tyrants who enslave so many of His children, and who permit them little time for the higher walks of Christian duty. His expectant eyes are fixed upon us, if haply He may see us seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, content if afterwards all the blessed fruits of service are added unto us. He wishes to see us busy about that character-building, which alone can make us fit to be called the disciples of Christ. He sees that there are a thousand battles to be fought and won, within "the deep of the heart," before we can become, in any effective and abiding sense, co-workers with God. O, how we Christian people are trying His patience! How far we seem to be from reproducing the Master's life in the world! O, my soul, is it thy stubborn purpose to defer thy response to the Master's call, until He shall come

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in anger with a whip of cords in His hands, and enter into His defiled temple and say: "Take these things hence?"

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee!"

For thee, that thou mayest make thyself over unreservedly to His spiritual guidance and governance; but in calling thee to Himself, He calleth thee to holy service and obedience. It is the second commandment; but it is like unto the first when love is the motive that moves it to activity. In the great renunciation of self, He does not even suggest any renunciation of outward activity. When we give Him the first affection and loyalty of our hearts, when with deep contrition we own the impertinence of service without soul-culture, and seek a nobler consecration, resolving to live in Him as members of a holy Head, then, and only then, are we qualified to give Him acceptable service; then, and only then, does a Divine virtue pass from the hem of His garment, and put vitality into our labors. Those who live on terms of conscious intimacy with God, who crown their manhood with its highest present possibility of attainment in the complete abandonment of their wills to God, and who repeat this act of self-transfer into His keeping hands, until the power of choice is resolved into an habitual preference for His will and way, are never found wanting when secondary duty claims first and orderly attention. On the contrary, just because they make God their first end,

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they are more likely than any one to be consistently and unweariedly faithful in that blessed service, which is their second end. Because they devote themselves to becoming good, they love to be doing good. In the solemn hush of prayer, apart from the gaze of the world, when meditation's sacred calm fills the soul, and the Holy Dove hovers over every thought and desire, the secret of true service stands revealed, and the will is at length informed with the power of the one true motive of action; which is love for God.

This, then, is the great and crucial lesson which the busy discipleship of our time needs to learn. It does not disparage zeal. It does denounce the spurious zeal which would crowd away the higher motives of activity from their lawful predominance, and does plead for the rehabilitation of that zeal which is the fruit of a profound spiritual devotion to God in the secret chambers of the soul. In one word, it is a cry for reformation!

The twentieth century promises to be the battle-ground of many issues in religion, sociology, philosophy and government; and it is already sending back the call for a better type of Christian man to stand forth and stand up in the defence and spread of the Catholic Faith. Only he who is full of the Holy Ghost and of power shall be equal to the conflicts, perils, sacrifices, that await the Church of God. O, coming man of God, thy heart filled with the love of Christ, thy faculties trained

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in the practice of the interior life, thy life devoted to thy one great end, delay not thy advent! The old soldiers, worn and weary with the battle, must soon disappear; and many have already greeted us, *morituri salutamus!* Let us listen to their last messages, and be better men, braver soldiers, truer disciples, than those that went before. Be God-inspired, God-possessed, God-fascinated men, and each man's strength shall be as the strength of ten!

May God bless the new Martha's message to our souls; and may He give us no rest from that word: "The Master is come and calleth for thee," until we find it in Him!

May the supreme crisis of each Christian life even now draw near, when the Searcher of hearts shall pronounce over surrendered self the blessed judgment of omniscient joy—"But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her!"

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